

Beneath Bromfkidor

Xenolite Press

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The Memoir of Wendell Wylie

By

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Prologue

I

Mulweeno

"Hogwash!" snarled Hammond, "What insipid hogwash!"

He tossed the newspaper aside contemptuously and rose from the desk to face Mollot. "In my country, we would treat this as no less than libel!"

Mollot heaved a sigh. The Baron had been a bit tightly wound on this visit to Mulweeno and the humorous picture stories by Mister McKay had served to infuriate him. In spite of this he insisted on reading the feature entitled "Little Nemo" every morning and then wasting half an hour pointing out in minute detail how the story misrepresents reality.

The incongruously tiny round reading glasses were still stuck on the nose of the hugely muscled black man, and the effect was comic enough to make Mollot chuckle. Woodrow Hammond was brought up short.

"Doctor Mollot, do you find my public mockery amusing?"

"Good heavens no, Lord Hammond, but here in the States, public figures learn to have quite a thick

skin. Satire always aims for a large target, you should be flattered."

"Flattered!?" He retrieved the paper and thrust it beneath Mollot's nose. " 'Pip continues his narrative about the *Jungle Imp's* adventure beyond the wall of ice'. *Jungle Imp!* The little creature is a cannibal in a grass skirt! Is this what the work of good men like Doctor Booker T. Washington has come to in this crazy land of yours? For Heaven's sake man, its 1908, the *twentieth century!* Not only is this a personal insult to me and the entire Negro race, it also totally misrepresents the purposes of my country in Bromfkidor!"

Mollot had been with Hammond on his last trip into the hidden republic of Bromfkidor beyond the Antarctic ice. In spite of the dangers and rigors of that journey, he found the comic strip rather amusing and clever. The Jungle Imp is a hero in spite of himself as he almost inadvertently thwarts dinosaurs and gray giants.

He had not been personally offended by the "Professor Mallet" character in an earlier McKay newspaper strip which depicted a dream of another world inspired by an improperly digested meal of Welsh Rarebit. He drew with architectural precision a universe filled with crate-like kites powered by gas engines and an American Union which commanded both oceans, rather like that formerly inhabited by the unfortunate Wendell Wylie.

Both Mollot and Hammond had briefly visited this world along with the entire crew of the *Norton* when they had used an exotic piece of equipment to save themselves from destruction. When they returned, poor Wylie came back with them. Mollot doubted that he even noticed the things said of him in public discourse. He quietly applied to the school that corresponded to the one he had attended in his own world and disappeared into his studies.

As stated before, Hammond had been peevish this entire visit. The government of the United States had refused entrance to either his wife or his son on the grounds that she was Bromfkidoran and he half Bromfkidoran. Two weeks before that He had been "retired" as chairman of the California Skyship Corporation and given an aristocratic title by the Californian Emperor in a transparent political maneuver to get him out of the public eye.

He had decided to come to the Dilmount Institute in Mulweeno to see Mollot in the hopes that he could develop with his help new mechanisms to improve skyshipping. Perhaps they might form their own corporation. At least they might produce some valuable patents. He just wanted to reclaim his place in the industry. He had gotten wind of some of the research that had gone on at the Institute in the last year. Mollot had entered into collaboration with a certain Nikola Tesla who had done much significant work with high frequency currents of electricity.

Hammond had swiftly grown tired of the life at court in San Francisco. His new title had brought him no joy. Given public reaction, it in fact had caused him some embarrassment. Just a few months before he had been created the Baron of Monterey in a mass ceremony along with about a dozen others who were granted titles. The Emperor had felt that the time had come to establish an aristocracy. It was his feeling that it would create a greater respect for California among the other nations. Instead, it aroused ridicule.

No American nation of the twentieth Century had a population of dukes, lords and ladies. William II, the great Emperor of the west, granted fewer and fewer titles and finally made it clear that no others would be given in his reign.

So Hammond was one of thirty-four who made up the tiny cadre of aristocrats in the Californian Empire. Of those few, only ten held titles which were hereditary. His son would also be Baron. Woodrow Hammond was unimpressed.

Woodrow Hammond would never be able to be very enthusiastic about the doings of the imperial court, he was more concerned with the ins and outs of the skyship business and technology. To his chagrin, his interest was that of an amateur for the last year and a half. The parliament had felt it was best to remove him as chairman of the California Skyship Corporation following his failed business venture (and his unauthorized "borrowing" of a military skyship) in the hidden republic of Bromfkidor.

He had been drawn to the Dilmount Institute by information he had received regarding some potentially astounding discoveries by Molott and the immigrant physicist Tesla.

Tesla had been in and out of the institute throughout the period of Hammond's visit. The tall Croatian would sometimes burst into Mollot's office and babble a few words about "high frequency current" or "specific radiance" or "rotating fields" or any number of other incomprehensible things. He and Mollot had been at work on the prototype for a very fast skyship. Just how fast they would not say.

The machine certainly didn't look like anything which had preceded it. It was small enough to be kept in a hut next to Tesla's lab. Because of the use of the parallel field devices, it required a bare minimum of gas to buoy it aloft. It merely rested on three spidery legs when the device was shut off. The polished steel and aluminum airframe was worked into a perfect streamline, utterly smooth without any control surfaces to break the contour. Tesla had said that its steering and attitude was controlled entirely by parallel fields.

Hammond had seen the ship lift only once during a power test without it making any particular impression except for the horrendous amount of noise. He was used to skyships producing only the throbbing drone of gasoline motors but this machine was lifted seemingly upon loudly discharging bolts of artificial lightning. He would learn more soon enough, for he intended to pilot the machine.

The entire line of research seemed to be a major departure from what he had known of skyship technology. While highly intelligent, Hammond was not a man of visionary imagination. He had done well in business, not because he had the disciplined mind of a scientist, but because he had the courageous heart of a warrior. He had been lucky enough to bring the original technology out of Bromfkidor and then smart enough to find the right people to help him develop it commercially. He had been able to run a business so successfully because he had had to succeed under much more dire circumstances at other times in his life. Now here he was, having suffered set backs and trying to regain his footing, with this gleaming mystery providing the means.

Mollot, realized that Hammond was in a somewhat sensitive state, and needing his financial help, had willingly spent much time helping to calm him down over what ever real or imagined offenses the world had handed him.

"Well, Lord Hammond..."

Hammond interrupted him. "For God's sake man, stop calling me that! Mister Hammond is more than sufficient."

Mollot breathed a deep sigh. "Mister Hammond, In the city of Mulweeno, for that matter in the entire state of Napoleana, Negroes and Whites have a little bit more of a sense of humor about these things. And I do believe that Mister McKay depicts humorous Scotsmen far more often than he does Negroes."

"Scotsmen were not enslaved to tend your farms!"

"No one was here, Hammond. This was the only place in the USA where it never happened. Never forget that. People here take great pride in that fact."

"Any way, *that* man is a New Yorker."

Hammond's petulance notwithstanding, the work was proceeding at a faster pace now that his name and cash was attached to the project. In the USA Hammond's name had a lot of weight and the American people very much wanted to see their nation catch up to the technological jump that California had on them. There was nothing that the population of the United States wanted more than to be first in all things. So much of the American self image depended on it. They had even claimed the generalized nationality of "American" as their own, which was seen with a somewhat resentful amusement by the Canadians, Colombians, Mexicans et. al. .

Alexander Rodman Mollot, who at the age of thirty-five had made a worldwide reputation for himself by engineering the miraculous escape from Bromfkidor of the Californian skyship Norton by passing it through what has been referred to as another "dimension". In this "other world" the southern continent was an ice covered wasteland all the way into the interior and sheltered no hidden temperate land, let alone a flourishing society. The opening of the so-called xenocontinua was an unplanned and unexpected effect of the machine that Mollot had built to control the effect of gravity on skyships. The heart of this machine was the static gravity focus matrix, better known as the "Mollot cell". This device creates a field where gravity has reduced effect. Within this field the borders between previously unknown "alternate realities" break down. In these fields objects can be accelerated to very high speeds when fed high frequency currents of electricity. Mollot had contacted the world's leading expert on the generation of high frequency fields, Nikola Tesla, and together they had been laboring to create a method of using this property as the basis for a new type of skyship engine. Tesla had predicted three generations of development. The first would be a principal test vehicle which would exist to identify engineering problems and to test the theories of propulsion. The second generation would be a ship which would be able to cross the gulfs between the planets within a few days. The third, he said, would be able to achieve the "absolute speed of the Universe" , as he put it.

Despite Tesla's colorful rhetoric, the actual work had shown that much of this was in fact, no fantasy. The first test, conducted one month before, had clocked an unmanned shell at over eight hundred miles per hour. The drive field had been very unstable and had generated several bursts of xenolithic material, that is matter which has its origin in a xenocontinuum. The ship in the shed next to Tesla's lab was a much more complex affair in which five men would cross the Pacific ocean in less than an hour if all went well.

Hammond wanted to perform this test under the combined auspices of the Dilmount institute and a new skyship products and research corporation which he would head up, Hammond Aero inc. He had been making a strong case to personally pilot the vehicle. His name was now among the world's most famous and any enterprise he participated in was eagerly watched by the public.

There was no question that the upcoming test was contributing to Hammond's state of unrest. As the day drew nearer issues even less important than the comic pages were seen to push him near apoplexy.

II

Around the World

Woodrow Hammond as well as members of the support crew had been enduring daily lectures on the minutiae of the ship's operations from Mollot and Tesla. Today's was the final one and was a refresher and overview of the peculiar ship's general mechanics.

Tesla was referring to a full sized model of the engine as he spoke. "These twin triads of coils at either side of the drive casing produce rapidly rotating fields which engender high frequency pulses that intersect at a series of points governed by a Fibonacci sequence. Axial drift is counteracted by both forward and rear passive ballast cells which damp all static gravity emanations save for those with a specific radiance of plus or minus 61.48 *hartleys*, which, as we now know, is the radiance at which the least amount of stelching will occur.

"Within the drive casing is a self correcting parallel resonant field translator with a series of redundant bleeder pins which, instead of controlling the balance of a third Mollot cell, monitor the radiant discharge of the fluxion tube. It is here that the main driving field is applied. The fluxion tube is the single portion of the engine which can be described as revolutionary. It is unique in that the energy state of the high pressure gas contained within can be minutely controlled. Care must be taken, however because the response rate of the field translator can fall behind the activity of the fluxion tube, particularly when the energy level crosses more than a balanced number of nodal points in phases six, twenty-four or eleven of the zoned power cycle. For this reason the fluxion tube can be ejected if the energy phase rises above fifty percent at those nodal points. A free fluxion tube in such a state is profoundly dangerous. There is a high probability of its entire mass converting to energy at once resulting in an explosion of unprecedented force. The ship can land safely without the fluxion tube but will not be able to maintain speed for more than a few seconds following the jettison. The conversion which takes place within the fluxion tube will step the energy across several xenocontinua while it is operating but the passive ballast cells should stabilize the xenospatial position of the ship."

Speeches like this tended to leave Hammond glassy eyed. He had learned the controls but felt his needs for a lot of theory were limited. He understood that, like all aircraft, this ship could kill him very fast if his attention strayed. At this point, the man of action within him was ready to just go. Enduring one more lecture for him would be a fate worse than death. Luckily, the test was now only a week away.

The details of the test were publicized eliciting both wonder and some ridicule from the press. It was claimed the new ship would travel from New York city to Nagasaki in Japan in one hour and forty minutes. Hammond and Tesla had agreed that if the engine performed well over that distance that a circumnavigation might be attempted without a landing in Japan. Hammond hoped that this would be the case, the publicity would be worth its weight in gold. The date of July first had been set for the flight.

Hammond, along with Tesla and two Dilmount engineering students would serve as crew on the test. The ship would carry few supplies as the maximum expected trip time would be about three hours and that was only if a circumnavigation was attempted. The relaxed feel that typically accompanied air travel

would be absent from this trip, particularly for Tesla who would have to monitor the engine's activity constantly.

Hammond was surprisingly calm on the morning of the test, the train had been very comfortable and he had been left to himself to go over notes and get some sleep. The test site on Staten Island had been mostly cleared of onlookers and would stay that way until about two hours before takeoff .

The King's county skyport had its entire west side cleared for the experimental ship's takeoff. In an hour or so, a crowd was expected to gather, but now all was quiet. Woodrow Hammond would make use of the next few hours double checking every system involved in the flight.

As Hammond was looking over the equipment at the test site, Mollot approached him.

"Mister Hammond, there is a gentleman here who wishes to make your acquaintance."

With him was a rather nondescript balding gentleman.

"Lord Hammond", he gushed as he pumped his hand vigorously, "I have long hoped to meet you face to face! I'm working on a motion picture which might be of interest to you! I understand you have quite a bit of experience with live avisaurs." The man seemed to speak without taking a breath. Hammond had indeed confronted live avisaurs. These creatures were the animals that inhabited the land of Bromfkidor and had come to be identified with dinosaurs of Earth's ancient aeons. They could be found in sizes several times that of an African elephant. Some were quite dangerous.

"Excuse me sir", said Hammond, "but you to seem to have the advantage of me."

The man blushed and released Hammond's hand "Good heavens! I'm so sorry Lord Hammond! Allow me to introduce myself, My name is Winsor McKay."

Hammond stepped back and his pupils dilated ever so slightly as he regarded McKay. His face looked as if he smelled something bad.

"And I, it would seem, am the *Jungle Imp*."

McKay looked nervous now , "Lord Hammond, I certainly hope that you haven't taken umbrage from my little fairy tale, it was all in jest I assure you!"

"Mister McKay, Professor Mollot and I really have a great deal of work to do here, so if we could perhaps speak another...."

The cartoonist interrupted, "If you would agree to see my motion picture, I promise you shall be amazed as you have never been before!"

McKay was rewarded with the first smile to cross Hammond's face in quite some time. "That would have to be amazing indeed, Mister McKay."

Encouraged, McKay continued. "I have undertaken a project to create a motion picture from thousands of drawings. *Animated* drawings."

"Living drawings?"

"My drawings run, jump and perform at my command!"

"Well, sir, that would be at least one novelty that I have never seen."

"It is a vaudeville entertainment about a trained avisaur."

"As wonderfully diverting as that sounds, Mister McKay, it will have to wait until after the test has been completed.

Mollot spoke up. "We hope you will attend the launching of the ship this afternoon."

"It would be a great honor gentlemen! I have already made several drawings of your astonishing skyship."

Hammond excused himself as McKay and Mollot continued conversing, to enter the ship and start checking out various of the systems. Seating himself in the thickly padded pilot's chair, he went step by step through the power up and power down check list while noting the position of each lever, switch and wheel for the hundredth time. He was as prepared as he could ever hope to be. The seats onboard had no belts or restraints because the crew was going to be protected from inertia by the static gravity field. Even a high speed crash should cause the occupants nothing more than a slight whiplash so long as the engine was still functioning. Woe be to them, however, should they lose power at a crucial moment, the end could come quickly indeed.

By noon, a mob of several thousand had pushed their way into the sky port to witness the great experiment or great calamity, whichever it might turn out to be. The papers had made much of the event and it had become socially required to be seen here this day. Last moment adjustments ran into hours and the ship wasn't declared ready to lift until 5:00 PM, but the crowd waited patiently to view the new wonder.

In the front of the crowd was the stage magician Houdini who had petitioned Mollot for a place on the flight crew, a notion which Mollot dismissed out of hand. He had actually worked in Mollot's lab for a short time trying to see what sort of new illusions might be developed using the parallel field equipment. After a few rather bizarre mishaps, the professor determined that the vaudevillian was a menace who took absurd chances with his own safety and brought his research to an end.

The well wishers were loudly celebratory and the music of Sousa's band inflated the mood. Sousa played "California" to honor Hammond and his own "Spirit of Mulweeno" march which he had composed for the Dilmount Institute baseball team.

The crew tipped their hats to the crowd as the boarded the ship, but did not stop to make speeches. They now would be totally focused upon their jobs. Particularly focused was Tesla who had spoken less and less as the day progressed and he prepared to spend the next two hours with his undivided attention on the several dozen meters attached to the new engine. His mind must not waver and his eyes must not close for even an instant.

The five man crew of aeronauts seated themselves at their posts in the ship's cramped cabin. Tesla announced final equipment checks and called out, "Up ship, Lord Hammond."

Hammond flipped a small lever on his control console and the ship gently rose from the ground. As it rose he pulled it about its yaw axis to point due west.

"Twenty seconds to fluxion initiation." called Tesla. A small gasoline motor was revving a compact dynamo up to speed as Tesla worked his way through his lengthy check list.

Outside the vessel miniature lightning bolts were crawling along its silvery skin.

"Ten seconds." called Tesla. A mercury pump was driving up the pressure within the fluxion tube and the gas started to glow a dull red. The rear ballast cell loudly discharged filling the cabin with the strange odor of ozone.

"Initiate." said Tesla quietly. Hammond flipped another switch.

The glow of the fluxion tube suddenly jumped from its deep red to a brilliant pink illuminating Tesla's face eerily. The ship appeared to grow hair made from thousands of rippling sparks. A powerful blast of electric fire reached out from the tapered tail of the ship which hurtled to the western horizon in the blink of an eye.

The entire skyport crowd was left open mouthed and silent by the disappearance of the ship. Houdini shook his head and then laughed, the only sound for many seconds.

On board the ship, all was calm and measured procedure. The initiation had gone like clockwork and Tesla continued through the startup checklist and began to monitor the fluxion tube.

The scrolling map on his console showed Hammond that three minutes into the flight, New Jersey was already behind them.

To Hammond, piloting the vehicle felt much like driving an automobile. The response time of the controls was quick and sharp and there was the constant sense of friction from the ship's passage.

Twenty six minutes in to the flight he saw that they were all ready over the fields of Indiana and were approaching their cruising velocity. Having reached a speed of eighteen hundred miles per hour, they had broken several times over the speed record of any vehicle that had ever come before. Because of static gravity effects, the full inertia from that velocity was not felt by those within the cabin. Also, Mollot had cleverly arranged that the floor of the ship's cabin would always feel like it was down no matter what the attitude of the ship might be.

Hammond, although he had known the sort of speeds they would be traveling, was still astonished to actually see it. Looking straight ahead he saw himself passing clouds like trees along a rail route. Looking at the distant ground he saw all features reduced to only a blur. Features of the land could tell him nothing about his position, he could barely tell if they were over land or water.

Mollot was calling out for periodic equipment checks from the students while Hammond and Tesla silently attended to their respective tasks. Mollot was performing measurements of atmospheric friction

and taking photographs inside the ship as well as through the windows.

To Hammond, it seemed as if almost no time had passed before they were over his native land and then in short order over the wide Pacific. The next expected landmark would be the Hawaiian Islands in less than twenty minutes.

Tesla was now dictating notes to one of the students as he monitored the fluxion tube. Its performance was apparently optimal and Tesla voiced satisfaction.

As the coast of Japan approached, Mollot spoke up. "I think we should continue on to New York."

Tesla and Hammond agreed. Because of the electrical interference created by the ship's engine, there was no attempt to inform anyone on the ground of their decision. The wireless set would simply not function while the drive was operating. The course of the little ship was adjusted to the north west so that the crossing of the Eurasian land mass would be mostly over the less populated regions.

Japan disappeared behind them as the little ship relentlessly drove for the Asian mainland. Here was the broadest piece of land on the entire planet and they were estimating that they would cross from Siberia to western Lapland in approximately one hour.

It was as they passed into southern Siberia that trouble struck. As predicted, all that happened passed within a very few seconds.

Hammond felt a slight bump at almost the same instant he heard a curse from Tesla's lips. He turned from the controls for an instant only to see that the cabin was no longer bathed in the pink glow of the fluxion tube. Looking back out the front port, he now saw that the ship was pitching end over end, which he could only see visually but not feel due to the controlled gravity within the ship. It was like the vision of one of mister McKay's unfortunate dreamers.

As he fought to right the ship he called, "What happened?"

Tesla called back "The tube made a massive energy jump! I had to dispose of it!"

"Land the ship! Land the ship!", Mollot shouted excitedly.

Hammond had successfully straightened out the ship which was now coasting at about one hundred and twenty miles per hour. Rapidly setting switches he was able to slow it further. He now saw that they were over a land of rocky soil dotted with stands of tall fir trees. A few miles behind them was a medium sized river. He knew that they were something more than one hundred miles north of lake Baikal. The river must be the Stony Tunguska. They were coming to a landing in a very remote region indeed. The ship settled just to the west of a stone strewn creek bed.

The shaken crew stepped out of the crippled aircraft, happy to have returned to the ground in one piece.

Hammond was the first to speak. "What happened to the fluxion tube? I thought it would have released enough explosive force to at least be seen from here."

Tesla answered, "More than merely enough to be seen, Lord Hammond, more by quite a tremendous

margin."

Mollot said, "It must have precipitated to a xenocontinuum. Most likely one of the more accessible ones, X-7C, X-12b or X-3f are the most likely. Hopefully this land is as barren there as it is here."

Tesla said, "Had it remained here, we would not have been far enough from it to survive."

With the ship's drive now shut down, the wireless would now function and thus they were able to signal their position to the outside world. The crew made camp and repaired the ship enough to get airborne again. another six days after that they arrived at Vladivostok where they were picked up by a Californian sky freighter and brought to Honolulu and so on. A month had passed before they had returned to Mulweeno to continue with work on the new engine. In spite of the failure, the original objective of the mission had been surpassed, and there was no question in the minds of Mollot, Tesla and Hammond that a revolution in aeronautics had occurred.

III

New York City

Hammond sat in a darkened theater marveling at the glowing image which flickered before him. The crisp line drawings moved with the smooth precision of living beings.

He had watched as the fictional narrative unfolded on the screen of black man capturing an egg in the secret land of Bromfkidor and conveying it through much misadventure to mister McKay in New York. Hammond caught himself laughing at the various humorous situations depicted as they led to the story of how mister McKay came to have this trained avisaur, Gertie, a gigantic long necked beast before this audience today.

Mister McKay himself then stepped onto the stage beside the screen and engaged the living drawing in a most realistic manner resembling the way a man might relate to a loyal canine. Gertie did tricks upon McKay's command and comically disobeyed him when his back was turned. In all it was a fine show and left Hammond in good humor. He thought that this man might have just opened the door to a truly original form of entertainment.

IV

Xenocontinuum X-12b

On the last day of June the Stony Tunguska cut its way through the peaceful landscape as it had for millennia. Although hunting parties would occasionally pass through this remote land, the local wildlife lived mostly without the fear of man.

The sky had been clear when the light appeared, brilliant pink, rapidly inflating to an immense fireball. An explosive blast struck the earth like the fist of a vengeful God. Those trees which were not immediately blown over lit like candles in a spreading firestorm. Nothing directly below the blast survived for more than a tiny fraction of a second. A roiling cloud of unforgiving hellfire consumed all in its path. Almost every tree for ten miles was flattened.

Thirteen miles away, one of the only humans in the region, a lone hunter, was blown off his feet and nearly deafened by the sound of the mighty explosion. When he again looked up he saw that the new Sun which had been born over the forest had given way to a pillar of black smoke reaching all the way to Heaven. Later it rained black drops from the sky. He would be the first of many to tell the story of this day.

In Irkutsk, Moscow, Java and as far away as Washington, seismographs registered an earthquake. It was dutifully noted by geologists, but it was years before they compared notes.

For many years mystery would surround this catastrophe. The men of wisdom would insist that it was the result of a meteor impact, but, no crater existed on the site and of course no piece of the hypothesized cosmic body would ever be found.

Introduction

I drew the brisk autumn morning into my lungs. The gentle wind stirred the fallen leaves into tiny mad maelstroms of red and gold which I further divided as I waded through. Harvard square swarmed with a thousand students, each and every one on some nameless mission of overwhelming import. I am happy to say that quite a few of them seemed to be on their way to the Harvard Bookstore.

I had made my living writing about the history of the world's contact with Bromfkidor, the land beneath the world.

Today, I was on my way to the Harvard bookstore to sign copies of "Black Pirate of the Lost World", my biography of Woodrow Hammond.

Hammond was, of course, the Californian adventurer who brought a skyship out of Bromfkidor in 1903 thus bringing flight to mankind. He was also a man who I was proud to call friend in the last years of his life. It was he who told me the tales of his first sojourns in the Antarctic which it was my good fortune

to publish as the books, "The Land Beneath the World", and "People of the Sky". He lived a long and fruitful life that included several professions, diplomat, businessman, politician and academic. He was a man of great energies which is well illustrated by the fact that when he was killed in an auto accident at the age of 103 he left a twenty-five year old widow.

Rebecca Hammond and I remain friends to this day.

Hammond was one of only about a dozen people granted titles during the brief period in which the Californian Empire experimented with the introduction of a titled peerage. He used the title of Baron of Monterey only very rarely and was rumored to dislike the concept of an aristocracy altogether. He served in the cabinets of three Prime Ministers, that of his son, D.D. Hammond, and William Richardson's as well as defense minister to Richard Milhouse Nixon the only PM to ever be removed from office by Imperial order for ethics violations.

Hammond was a rare man and one I was lucky indeed to have known.

I arrived at the bookstore and was seated at a table which would be my personal torture chamber for the next few hours. I would sign endless copies of my book to sons and nephews of elderly ladies who were "crazy about aviation". It was always a great disappointment to me that so very few pretty young women showed up at these things. For the hundredth time I made a mental note to try my hand at a "bodice ripper".

As book after book was stuck under my nose, I was surprised to see a dirty old envelope placed in front of me. It was about 12"x 18" and tied up with a piece of twine.

Looking up I saw before me a peculiar looking young man. He had somewhat unkempt brownish blonde hair of no particular length surmounting a rather pallid face which sported a pair of thick-lensed spectacles awkwardly repaired with tape.

"I, you know, found this and thought you might, you know, want it." He spoke in a sort of nasal whine which I found utterly distasteful.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Its an old manuscript. I found it in a file cabinet that they were throwing out at M.I.T. I think its about the first war."

"Thanks." I said, wishing to keep the line moving at any cost.

He withdrew a pen from a plastic pocket protector and tore a corner from the envelope. He started to write.

"Here's my number if you have any, you know, questions. Or if you just want to talk about something."

I was having difficulty imagining what peculiar circumstance would result in my "just wanting to talk" to this fellow. I pocketed the scrap of paper and thanked him. as he left I noticed that he wore mismatched socks which were ill hidden by trousers a few inches too short. Obviously a screwball.

I threw the envelope into my bag and forgot it. Hours later, when I arrived home, I tossed my bag on the kitchen table spilling its contents every which way. The old envelope split upon hitting the table creating an unwelcome mess.

My heart almost stopped when I saw the name on the title page, Wendell Wyley. Surely not Admiral Wendell Wyley. The title was "War Memoirs, 1914-15". My God! This was impossible. Wyley had written several books including "Understanding the Bromfkidorans" and "Modern Air Combat" but the only one which could be seen as autobiographical would be "Rising to the Challenge" in which he chronicled his unsuccessful run for the presidency. Never before had anything emerged written in his own hand of his exploits during the first Bromfkidoran engagements.

Wendell Wyley was first known as the "Man from Another Dimension", who had come from a nearby xenocontinuum as a result of a Parallel Resonant Field Translator mishap. After 1910 this technology was outlawed as dangerous to the general public,* but before then experiments in using them to lighten skyships by displacing a substantial portion of their mass looked promising. Unfortunately the slightest miscalculation could result in the displacement of an entire ship. On just such an occasion, Wendell Wyley and a peculiar flying machine were brought to this world.

Wyley quickly adapted to life here and used his love of aviation to gain him a place in the U. S. Aeroforce.

Today, he is mostly remembered as the great Republican elder statesman. FDR's loyal opposition. Others will surely wish to note that he was the prime mover of the first lunar mission which placed the first foot prints on the Mare Imbrium in 1927.

The reputation on which he built his remarkable career was forged years before in the Antarctic circle.

I searched desperately for the piece of paper with the phone number on it but in vain. I had recently given up cigarettes in favor of Double-Bubble and, to my chagrin, I realized that I must have wrapped my gumwad in it and thrown it out.

For weeks I asked questions around the M.I.T. campus but was unable to turn up any evidence of the youth who had brought me the envelope. On the very day that I had decided to give up I found evidence of who the mystery man was. When looking through some recent Boston Globes doing entirely unrelated research, I saw his picture and a short article. His name was Ruben Howard Cox and he had met with accidental death in a bizarre and unfortunate fraternity hazing incident six days after he had brought me the envelope.

Wyley had no living relatives or heirs and the library that he had left all his papers to did not count this among them so it looked like I was free to publish the manuscript as I saw fit.

This so-called manuscript was a disorganized collection of letters, lists, notes, a couple of phonograph recordings, some photographs and souvenirs and random scrawlings. Ultimately it would take me a year and a half to compose a readable account from what I had here.

Much of what the reader will find here is recreated from the notes of Wendell Wyley supplemented with surmise based on historical fact and various memoirs which spoke of him and his times. I drew

heavily on the writings of that first lunar cosmonaut, Charles Lindbergh, for background on Admiral Wyley for they had known each other well.

The only known written memoir by Woodrow Hammond actually deals with Admiral Wyley a great deal in unflattering, brutally honest terms. Hammond and Wyley met many times but never quite connected as human beings. It was rather well known, for instance, that Wyley disliked Blacks, Chinese and Bromfkidorans. Whenever he reviewed troops or inspected equipment at the air base at Mulweeno, he was always heard to ask the commanding officer,

"How are things here in 'Nigger Heaven'?".

This intolerance, some have said, was the result of the shock of being transported across space-time. Others have said that he was just a narrow minded bigot. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to support either position. Perhaps this volume will serve to clarify this at least a little.

Much of his time was spent visiting various universities hoping to find a way back to his own world. In 1943 he was projected back to xenocontinuum X-12-B for only sixteen hours. After that experience, of which he never spoke, he discontinued his efforts to return to his home dimension. He wrote, lectured and advised until his death in 1950.

So let us journey back, gentle reader, to the early days of mankind's mastery of the air. Allow me, if you will, to paint a picture of those thrilling times when the world was drawn into the greatest conflict of the twentieth century. The scene is in southern Patagonia, October 1914

* This technology was, of course, eventually applied to the problem of space flight and revived as a result.

† Although this is a common nickname for the city, frequently used even by its own residents, and this has been used to defend Admiral Wyley's use of the term, it still reflects poorly on the Admiral's disposition toward minorities.

Chapter One

Above the Plains

The lush green of the pampas was now far behind us having give way to this rocky, semi arid land.

From the aerie of the USS *Andrews* I watched a flock of rheas as they coursed through the scrub spotted plain, come just a little too close to a clump of bushes. The creature that emerged to take one of the massive birds down looked, at first glance, like a bird itself, only with a lot more teeth.

"That's why we're here?" I asked.

The man behind me was a tall muscular Negro, the Californian foreign minister, Woodrow Hammond, Baron of Monterey. I admit that at that time I had yet to get used to the idea of a black man, even one as erudite as Lord Hammond, in a position of power.

He responded, "That is the reason. They keep them as pets, watchdogs, but this one was probably born here from parents gone feral. A wild specimen could be quite dangerous."

As I watched the feathered, quasi-reptilian, monster dismember the big bird using the knife-like claws on its toes, I felt I had to agree.

"How do you think it got here?"

"They brought them. They have most likely had exploration teams coming here for over two years."

That was the day that we knew it had begun. They, of course, were the Bromfkidorans, militant inhabitants of the lost Antarctic civilization.

The United States government had sent the *Andrews* under my command into southern Patagonia to prove or disprove reported sightings of avisaurs, the dominant vertebrate class in Bromfkidor, unknown elsewhere in the world. It was now generally agreed by the world's most eminent zoologists that these creatures were direct descendants of the great dinosaurs of the long past Mesozoic Aeon. And they were only a tiny part of what made this lost empire so unique.

Locked in a strange region of the Antarctic continent, this land seemed to defy all reason simply by existing. And yet, there it was, squatting beyond its protective shell of icebound wasteland creating the greatest threat to world peace in history.

The first man I met in this new world was a Bromfkidoran, Wolard Bidzhiro who is now a ship's captain in the Californian Aeroforce.

These gangly gray-skins, those who told in my orders from the Admiralty was that he was an expert on Bromfkidor. What I hadn't been told was that he was not to be dissuaded by danger, by God he was even drawn to it! He informed me in no uncertain terms that he would not be removed.

He wasn't a military man, so I just assumed that he had no understanding of the necessity of following orders. It turned out that he understood perfectly. He merely didn't care.

There was a rumor that he had once hijacked the flagship of the Californian fleet. Had conditions been

different, I might have assumed this to be an exaggeration.

I would have been incorrect.

Hammond had in fact taken the ISS Norton into Bromfkidor without permission from his government resulting in loss of lives of civilian personnel as well as a Californian ship, the San Francisco. As a sidelight of that particular escapade, I was snatched from my own world and deposited in this one without so much as a "by-your-leave"!

His entire attitude reflected a lack of respect for authority. Not only authority held over him, but authority that he held over others. By claiming that he "valued autonomous thought" he served as a poor example to his subordinates.

Because he discovered the Bromfkidoran government's plans to invade the outside world he was, instead of being thrown in prison as he richly deserved, granted a title and quietly replaced as chairman of CSC in favor of someone more predictable. Shortly after that he was selected as a cabinet minister by William Richardson who's party had come to power that year.

For the last ten years he has been visiting foreign heads of state and giants of industry spreading moonshine about the peril from the south. At least I was certain that it was moonshine until today.

I was still not totally convinced by the one peculiar creature, for the world has many unknown wonders, but it would have to be a mighty coincidence.

In any case, I could do nothing with a foreign dignitary aboard and even less until I had gotten word from the admiralty. A yeoman rushed onto the bridge and handed me a telegraph transcription. The name at the bottom got my attention before I had even read it, it belonged to the president of the United States of America. The text was straightforward:

Captain Wyley,

You are to proceed south to the Drake Passage. There you will keep station until you receive further orders. Engage any ships which come from the south that you out gun. Engage them but do not fire the first shot. The first shot fired in such engagement will make official that a state of war exists between the United States and the Republic of Bromfkidor, otherwise radio for assistance. The Baron of Monterey will serve as advisor. You will defer to his judgment. The fleet is on the way.

Woodrow Wilson

Defer to Hammond? War with the unknown republic?

It had been agreed by a conference of world powers two years before that containment of the Bromfkidorans to their own land must be absolute and rigidly enforced.

Hammond had journeyed there after that declaration had been issued to convey the message to their government. The king, Buerno Montolla, responded by having Hammond's ship shot down, causing Lord Hammond great difficulty in returning to California. I understand that thereby hangs a tale worthy of an entire book.

I took the ship to the Drake Passage with Hammond still aboard and myself full of trepidation.

The *Andrews* was not the largest or the most heavily armed in the U.S. Aeroforce. I was worried that She alone might have to stand for the U.S.. She was manufactured by the Goodyear yards at Akron, Ohio in 1912 as a midweight frigate. In shape she was a flattened cigar 400 feet long by 180 feet wide by 100 feet high. Her mass was about 85 tons which is explained by the fact that she was mostly made of empty space. That space was filled to a great degree with the buoyant helium that held the ship aloft. She was powered by five large gasoline engines and had a range of 1500 miles. Her compliment was two-hundred and twenty souls.

In my home world people had been starting to develop ships of this type when "heavier than air" craft came along in 1903. In this world as in mine, that year marked the first powered glider built by Orville and Wilbur Wright. Today that great achievement is viewed as nothing more than a stunt rather than a milestone in the history of technology.

Today, in this world, the Wrights are manufacturers of the world's finest bicycle, the famous Wright Flyer. I understand that they are doing very well and rarely talk about their aeroplane except among similarly enthusiastic friends. The technology of the aeroplane froze in 1903 in this world. That was because of Hammond who brought a Bromfkidoran skyship out of the far south that year. We were given a new technology fully formed out of this land of Bromfkidor which doesn't even exist in the world of my birth.

I wondered if the Andrews would have to go there before this was all over.

The waters of the Drake Passage were red with the bodies of a billion tiny krill. The water was tortured into whitecaps and whirlpools. Whales heaved their huge bodies among the waves, feeding off the krill in a leisurely fashion as the occasional albatross would find rest on one or another's broad back. The men who hunted these whales had been chased from the region a few weeks before when the Bromfkidoran threat had become apparent. They had complained bitterly, but in the end they had left, much to the relief, no doubt, of the whales.

At our altitude, land was just barely visible in the distance. Hammond, standing unseen behind me, made me jump when he spoke.

"Palmiroj of the Outer Waste." he said pointing to the land at the horizon.

Attempting to inject some humor, I said, "'Pommeroy of the outer waste', it sounds like the title of some dime novel about a mountie."

Hammond rolled his eyes. "Pal-Meer-Oy" he said, sounding out each syllable, "we call it the Palmer peninsula. It is the farthest extension of the ice-bound desert that the Bromfkidorans refer to as the Outer Waste."

Good God! Had this man no sense of humor whatsoever? "Lord Hammond, I was only making a little joke."

"Little indeed. 'Mister' Hammond is sufficient if you wouldn't mind. I dislike titles"

"Mister Hammond do you never smile?"

Hammond turned his great head toward mine and bent a little to place himself eye to eye with me. His lips split into a broad grin, his brilliant white teeth making a startling contrast with his dusky skin.

"Odd fellow..." I muttered to no one in particular.

Within a few hours, I received a wireless message from the Argentine Government. They were sending a squadron of light fighter ships to support our action. The new Argentine president, Victorino de la Plaza, wanted to impress the world with his decisiveness. The grays would have to face a lot on their first time out.

The Brazilians were also sending some sort of advanced warship under the command of Captain Alberto Santos-Dumont, one of the few men who was actually involved in airship design before contact with Bromfkidor. Upon exposure to Bromfkidoran ideas, he was able to advance his designs by several decades in only a few years. No one outside of the Brazilian military had yet seen this new ship.

Similar work was being done at that time in Germany by Count Zeppelin who built the world's biggest commercial aircraft company. Zeppelin Works and CSC together manufactured ninety percent of the world's aircraft in 1914.

I was worried about Santos-Dumont, who was rumored to have an even bigger head than Hammond.

Within a day, the Argentine flotilla had rendezvoused with the *Andrews* and together we hung above the gray ocean awaiting whatever would come next.

I had asked Lord Hammond what sort of force we were likely to encounter. He responded with one word. "Cloud Masters."

"Just what in blazes are 'Cloud Masters'?"

"Huge, heavily armed, warships. They carry a thousand troops in addition to the crew. They serve as flying hangars for a flight of smaller ships. Unless you have a force at very least three times what we have here, run if you see one. I was able to destroy the prototype in '06, but I was unable to deter them from constructing more. How many, I do not know."

I didn't even want to ask him how he had managed to destroy one of these monsters of the air.

"So, California will be sending some ships....right?"

My nervous query would be answered two days later when the ISS Stevenson showed up along with an escort of four smaller vessels. The international fleet was now a dozen ships with Brazil yet to make a showing and U.S. reinforcements still a thousand miles away. This was how things stood a few hours later when the first Bromfkidoran ship was sighted on the southern horizon. She or rather "it", for the grays don't personify their vessels, was a small patrol ship. Most likely small of crew and light of armament. Upon sighting us it sped in our direction. I saw no reason not to stand our ground.

As it came closer the peculiar semaphore array, which is used for ship to ship communication in Bromfkidor, came to life. I called Hammond to the bridge as he was the only one on board who could read these signals. Presently he appeared at my side.

"You summoned me Captain Wyley?"

I pointed out the patrol ship which was now repeating the pattern it had previously signaled.

Lord Hammond squinted into the distance. "...Hold fire...must talk..." he translated.

"I thought these people saw 'diplomacy' as a dirty word."

Hammond replied, "I thought so too. I'm going to have to go over there."

"I beg your pardon?!?" I shot back, aghast. If I were to let Hammond get himself killed, I would be court-martialed and thrown in a deep, dark hole until Hades froze over! "That is absolutely out of the question!"

Hammond took on the patient tone one uses to explain something to an inquisitive five-year-old. "We have no semaphore array. They have no wireless. I speak their language. Captain Wyley, if you can formulate some alternative plan, please do so."

Lord in Heaven, this man was irksome! I tried to think quickly. "We will surround the ship closely. One of our smaller ships will take a single man from the gray's ship aboard. Thence he will be brought to you to be interviewed. Please teach one of the crewmen the Bromfkidoran phrase for 'send one man'."

To my utter amazement, the Baron agreed to this and selected one of the bright young officers to drill in a few key phrases of the Bromfkidoran tongue. This man was transferred to one of the Argentine light ships which in turn carried him to the Bromfkidoran patrol ship.

We watched through a telescope a gangway was extended to the side of the invader. One man walked across and the gangway was withdrawn.

The man was brought to the *Andrews* and was escorted to my private office. Hammond and I were both in full dress uniform of our respective ranks and nations. I was surprised to see that among the medals on Lord Hammond's tunic were some of obvious Bromfkidoran origin.

A phonograph was set running to make an accurate record of the conversation.*

The man was brought in and Hammond caught his breath. Apparently he recognized the man, who seemed to me a typical gray. He was about six feet five inches tall with light gray skin. He had eyes that were the color green often seen on cats and his beak-nosed face was framed by shoulder length auburn hair.

The conversation was carried on in gray lingo, so it was not until I consulted with Lord Hammond afterward that I knew what had transpired.

This is that exchange.

Hammond tried to control his initial surprise.

"I believe that we have met. I am Woodrow Hammond of California, Baron of Monterey and Prince Consort of the house of Sharomna."

The man looked him up and down appraisingly.

"We have indeed met before. I am Captain Romiro Alprendauro commanding the *Massad Kora*. I am acting as an official representative of Stomo Nomchitka do Bromfkidoro by direct order of king Buerno Montolla. You have been required by that government to stand down and let pass all authorized transports of the Parliament of Nations of the United World. Failure to do so will result in the arrest and/or summary execution of those parties who continue to act against the laws humanity." "Partner Hammond", He continued, "on a more personal note, I want you to know that I hold you personally responsible for the death of Dzhidro Bogadnij Alprendauro, my brother."

Upon reviewing the notes of this conversation for the first time, I must admit that I was confused by that last statement, for I had actually made the acquaintance of Dzhidro Alprendauro who was very much alive and happily married to a young Californian woman of some breeding.

The Baron's reply set the record straight.

"Dzhidro is still alive. Do you propose to hold me personally responsible for that?"

"Alive?....."

"Yes, alive. He is a naturalized citizen of the Empire of California."

Some wind seemed to have been taken from Captain Alprendauro's sails.

"If that is the case, you have done worse than caused his death, you have taken the honor of our family and made a mockery of it. Get in my way, Woodrow Hammond, and I shall personally have your blood."

"So you do not like me. Do you suppose that I have never been disliked before? You are here on business for your king. Please conclude it and return to your ship. I have no interest in your tantrums and I am unimpressed by your threats."

Alprendauro bit into his lower lip but held his composure. At that point Hammond signaled me to read my statement which he translated.

"To the King and Parliament of the Bromfkidoran Republic. The president and congress of the United States of America has declared that any hostile action by forces originating in your lands upon any lands below 75 degrees south latitude or hostile action upon any ships of sea or sky belonging to those lands or any planting of colonies of persons or livestock in those lands will result in the existence of a state of war between our peoples. Dated October second, nineteen hundred fourteen."

Hammond read an almost identical statement from the Californian government. Captain Alprendauro was then handed written statements from the governments of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Australia, Colombia and New Zealand.

He was then taken from my office and returned to his ship as quickly as possible.

Our little fleet made room for the Bromfkidoran ship to depart peacefully, but before turning back toward the Antarctic mainland, the fired one shot across the bow of the *Andrews*.

The gauntlet had been taken up.

*The conversation is here reconstructed from that disc which was included as part of Admiral Wyley's notes.

Chapter Two

The Drake Passage

Two weeks later found me in Washington having been summoned by the president.

An aide showed me into the Oval Office where I was greeted by the spare, bespectacled gentleman who was my Commander in Chief.

Standing at attention I said, "Captain Wendell Wyley, United States Aeroforce, reporting as ordered sir."

The man looked me up and down like a Headmaster attempting to devise a particularly clever punishment for a wayward student.

"Captain Wyley, you are not a native born American, correct?"

I was taken aback. "Mister President, I grew up in Greenfield Massachusetts and I was born in Staunton, Virginia, which, if I am not mistaken, is your own home town!"

"My understanding is that it was not my Staunton, as it were."

"Perhaps not, not of your world but you were there. I heard you speak at Princeton in '05. I shook your hand afterward."

The president looked perplexed. I do not believe he had yet understood how very like this world my home dimension was. Finally he spoke again. "Allow me to rephrase my initial question, am I to be assured that you harbor unadulterated loyalty to the United States of America?"

I responded with sarcasm that I immediately regretted "Shall I recite the Pledge of Allegiance, Mister President?"

The president shot back, "That is precisely all I wish to hear of that sort of talk, Mister Wyley! It is *vital* that I know the degree of your loyalty to the U.S., are we understood?"

"Understood, sir."

"The real shooting is yet to begin but when it starts, you, Captain Wyley, are going to be near the center of the action. Bromfkidor must be permanently contained at any cost.

"Now, tell me, what is the current strength of the international force in the Drake Passage?"

"thirty four ships, only about half of them large and well armed. The largest seems to be the *Pinzon* out of Brazil. It is about the biggest I have ever seen. It is captained by Alberto Santos-Dumont. California has sent the *Stevenson* and the *Norton* under the command of Abraham Stein and Wolard Bidzhiro respectively. We have the *Andrews*, of course as well as the *Akron* and the *Sequoyah*. Argentina has sent a fleet of light patrol ships."

The president nodded as he received this information. "I have obtained cooperation and agreement from our allies that you shall be placed in charge of that entire force with the rank of commodore. The Baron of Monterey will remain with you for the time being as an advisor. In matters regarding Bromfkidoran culture and custom, you are to treat his 'advice' as orders."

"Mister President, if I might..."

"You will now return to your ship at the Drake Passage where you will have broad discretion in the use of that force. That will be all, Mister Wyley." His dismissal brooked no argument so I turned on my heel and left the White House. The Admiralty treated me in similar fashion, issuing orders without answering any questions. What the president had outlined, they presented in detail. I was given maps of the Antarctic coastline as well as a somewhat sketchy map of Bromfkidor itself with possible military targets marked.

For several days I attended meetings and advanced training sessions. One of these sessions led me to a small cabinet in the Smithsonian Institution. Contained here were almost all of the Bromfkidoran artifacts in the United States. What caught my eye first was a pistol and rifle as good as any ever made in Europe or America. Next to them was one of their telephone devices, known as a "briodkoj", literally "far-talk". There was also a mounted avisaur that looked like a cross between a rat and a lizard. It was in fact the Bromfkidoran equivalent of a rat. There was a skyman's uniform, a small board game of some sort, a beer bottle and a few books that only two or three Americans could read. I would learn nothing significant here. Before I left, I visited the aeronautics wing. Hanging in a dimly lit corner away from the huge skyships was the single link to my origins the aeroplane which brought me to this world.

I built it from plans I obtained from the Wrights themselves. Now it resides here as a novelty calculated to titillate the curiosity of the masses. This was the future of my world, more than likely still is. Here it is little more than a quaint gizmo, a pathetic shadow of some foggy might have been. whenever I come here, I think it will be hard to leave but it always turns out to be easy. The world from which this contrivance hails is impossibly far away, existing here in my mind alone.

It was time to return to the fleet. After two weeks away from the *Andrews* I now had to take on the job of organizing the entire fleet into a unit that will respond instantly and unitedly.

I was ready.

That afternoon I set out for the south to take my place at the head of the international flotilla. A day and a half later I was in Bolivar boarding the Colombian ship which would carry me the rest of the way back to the fleet.

It had grown while I was in the States. There was now a fair sized Colombian and British representation. The only South American power remaining unrepresented was Chile whose Aeroforce had been destroyed several years earlier in a war with Colombia. Now the task of their defense had fallen to their former enemies.

Another week passed before we saw the first hostile action out of the south. Over distant Palmiroj hung a lens-shaped shadow.

Hammond leaned close to my ear, "dreadnought" he said.

I made a snap decision. "We're going in." I said.

The *Andrews* left the rest of the fleet over the ocean and started for the Palmer peninsula at high speed.

Hammond had insisted on having a Bromfkidoran type semaphore device installed on the *Andrews* which, I admit was a good idea, but I was horrified to see that he had brought a gray on board to operate it.

"Lieutenant Tholando", he said, "is a Californian citizen and utterly loyal to the Emperor and to this cause. He is also the most experienced semaphore operator outside Bromfkidor."

The Baron's input could not be ignored by me, but I had to

walk a fine line in maintaining command. "That man is never to be alone." I had told him. It was a

hollow victory for me. It was just this sort of thing which would continue to characterize the relationship between Hammond and myself.

The land that the grays called "Palmiroj" was cold and forbidding. We had gained intelligence that they had been building towns out here and more importantly, military installations. the Admiralty had suggested that one of our goals in this conflict would be the control of this land as a base for containment forces.

The dreadnought was about ten miles farther south. It was obvious that we had been spotted. The huge ship was now approaching us and semaphoring as it came.

The gray lieutenant translated. "You have invaded the sovereign lands of the Republic of the United World.* As agents of rebellion you are commanded to stand down and surrender your ship." Speaking for himself, Tholando asked "Do you have a reply?"

"Yes," I said, "I do." Calling to the Gunnery Officer I said, "Shoot it down!"

A volley of shells issued from the forward guns all of which solidly struck the Bromfkidoran vessel taking out an engine but leaving it otherwise air worthy. The dreadnought fired back putting a hole in one of the gas cells. I sent a repair crew to the scene and ordered the ship forward to give chase to the vessel which had now turned from the fight.

In spite of its damaged engine, the Bromfkidoran ship stayed ahead of us for most of a day as we pursued. The *Andrews* had now passed her maximum range and we had sent a wireless message for a tanker to meet us, but if we traveled much farther we would not even make it back to rendezvous with it.

Lord Hammond urged me to turn around.

"Commodore Wyley, we are heading for Bromfkidor and we are only one ship! Please turn back so that we will be able to return for reinforcements." We were in the region of the peak known as "Bontor Sharmodna" beyond which lay the Republic, so I had to agree with Hammond that turning back was the best course of action. I wish now that I had made that decision a little while earlier.

As we passed into the foothills of Bontor Sharmodna I saw the dense clouds above the mountain part as three ships appeared to dwarf both the dreadnought and the *Andrews*. The Bromfkidoran dreadnought that we pursued was only a fifth the size of one of the new ships which now faced us. They resembled the dreadnought in general configuration save for two huge docking masts on their upper decks to which smaller ships were attached.

The ships sides were decorated with a stylized image of a storm cloud emitting a lightning bolt. We were facing flying cities like Gulliver's island of Laputa.

"Cloud Masters" said Hammond. I found it blasted annoying that this man insisted on identifying each type of ship we encountered as if he were a bird watcher. A shot from one of the Cloud Masters across our bow galvanized me from my minor irritation into action.

To stand and fight against these odds would have been irrational and irresponsible. I called for the *Andrews* to be turned and headed as quickly as possible for a gorge that I had spotted about a mile behind us. The ships moved to take advantage of our weaker position with no great haste, well they knew that

escape was nigh impossible for us. If I could maneuver us into a place where our smaller size would serve as an advantage, there would be a chance of saving the lives of some of my crew.

A second shot from one of the giant ships set our upper deck to flames as we beat a hasty retreat. The fire spread so rapidly that I had to assume that they had fired some sort of flammable substance at us. I called orders for crash stations to the crew as we became a shooting star in the Antarctic sky.

I was still calling orders all over the ship as it plummeted into the ice filled canyon.

Chapter Three

Battle with the Wing Men

The *Andrews* sat at an angle in the canyon bottom as crewmen scrambled to extinguish the flames which threatened to consume the upper deck.

We were trying to radio a warning to the fleet as well as a distress call.

We might be able to get the ship back into the air on our own but we no longer had enough fuel to reach the Drake Passage, let alone the mainland of South America.

Snow blew into the canyon as we frantically worked to repair the damage. Enough gas remained to buoy the ship as long as we could get at least one engine functioning. It took six days during which it got colder and colder inside the ship. The wireless was entirely silent in all that time.

I planned that we would go under power as far as we could and then would "free balloon" from that point while broadcasting a distress signal.

We finally got into the air and started for the ocean trying to gain as much speed as we could. When we were still about fifty miles short of the coast the fuel ran out and we started to float free.

I have always been a man of action and free ballooning the ship was an act of passivity. I could do nothing but let the fickle winds do with me as they would. By, I am sure, purest luck, the *Andrews* drifted

out over the passage into a dark night.

Luck, it turned out, went only so far. a storm caught us and the entire crew was tossed about the ship causing all manner of injuries for over six hours. When day broke the ship was damaged beyond all use. Over a third of the crew was either dead, missing or too injured or sick to stay at their posts. We were over land, the island of Tierra Del Fuego. We had no power at all, even for the wireless and we could see no persons on the land nor any ships on the sea or in the air. The ship was drifting and I felt that we had best land before we again drifted over water. I called to vent gas and our descent began. We drifted over Magellan's straits and came to a more or less gentle landing a few miles from Punta Arenas, Chile.

We were a rag-tag lot that emerged from the wreck of the *Andrews*, clothing torn, little food and only limited weapons.

It seemed that no one from Punta Arenas had seen us go down so we would have to go there. fearing that the ship would be looted by locals, I ordered that anything we might need be taken along. I had all crewmen load full packs of supplies for the march. Hammond had a worried look and I had no time to ask him why. He was distracted, Lieutenant Tholando, his friend, had been killed in the storm. He seemed to be sniffing the air.

I had donned my dress uniform with its high cap and ceremonial sword for it was all of my clothes that remained unscathed.

I saw that Hammond had also buckled on a sword and when he saw me looking at him he said, "Good idea, we'll want weapons."

I thought "what for?" Lord Hammond evidently thought that we might be in some sort of danger, while I was smugly sure that our danger had passed.

Our trek to Punta Arenas ended when we were about halfway there. One of the Cloud Master ships hung above the town. An enormous spiral ramp leading to the main street of the city with a constant flow of traffic moving both ways upon it was suspended by a myriad of large balloons.

I sent a small scouting party to learn more of what had happened here. The news upon their return a few hours later was very bad. While we had labored to free the *Andrews*, the Cloud Masters had driven back the allied fleet and moved onto the continent.

Everything south of the Santa Cruz river was now Bromfkidoran.

At this point I felt that we must return to the wreck of the *Andrews* and set up a base there. The first great battle of the war had been fought and lost and the *Andrews* had not even been there. It was our misfortune to now find ourselves behind enemy lines. The president would be furious. With luck, I wouldn't survive and have to face him.

Our return trip to the sight of the wreck also ended halfway.

In the distance, I could see that the ship had been discovered by Bromfkidoran forces and was being salvaged. The manner in which it was being salvaged left me speechless.

Just plain disbelief is how I would describe my reaction to the sight I now beheld. The enormous skyship was being hauled upon a huge sledge through the muddy valley. But it was not the vehicle so much as the choice of draft animal which made the scene one of utmost wonder. There were ten of them and each one had to be at very least the size of ten to fifteen full grown bull elephants. They were long necked and long tailed with barrel-like bodies. The legs that supported these bodies were pillars of flesh, bone and sinew as big around as the great redwoods of California. They had to be close relatives of the long extinct brontosaurus for they resembled them in every particular save size where they exceeded any fossil of that creature that I had ever seen. Although I'm not sure why, I was surprised to see that these creatures were brightly colored with great stripes of green and orange. They called out in voices like the orchestra from a madhouse. The sound climbed up my spine like electricity and I broke a sweat in spite of myself.

Never in my wildest dreams did I suspect that monsters such as these still walked the earth. I was filled with awe and respect for the works of nature.

The wreck of the Andrews was being conveyed to a spot near the base of a great hill where one of the Cloud Master ships lowered a multitude of lines that were in turn attached to the hulk. The monster ship would easily be able to carry the Andrews to some place where it could be studied in detail.

This could not be allowed to happen, all of our newest devices were incorporated into the Andrews and would bring disaster were it to fall into gray hands.

I had to think fast, for the moment we had been lucky enough to have not yet been spotted but that couldn't last for long.

I gave a few quick instructions and had everyone seek cover as quickly and as well as they could. I then ran out into the enormous rut left by the sledge. The Bromfkidorans who were guiding the sledge's progress turned from their work to see me running toward them hollering curses and slander of their parents.

I leapt for one of the hundred or so lines dangling from the ship and grabbed it with one hand. With the other hand I drew my sword as I was swung up to the back of one of the gigantic avisaur.*

The man who was guiding the great creature looked at me aghast. I wasted not a second of time and ran him through with my blade before his expression could change. Desperately I started hacking at the thick ropes of the avisaur's harness. The gigantic beast seemed to be only dimly aware of me, it was my suspicion that the animal was actually quite stupid. First one rope, then another parted. By now the other teamsters had seen what was going on, but a beast of this size is not casually dismounted from thus giving me some time. I now held the strange "bridle" which was used to turn the dim-witted monster's head for steering. Slowly the weighty animal came about complaining with basso profundo ululations. I was hoping that I would be able to create a big enough disturbance to divert attention from the actions of the crew.

It might seem odd that an Aeroforce commodore in full dress uniform with a drawn sword on dinosaur back would be worried that he was not causing enough of a stir, nonetheless this was precisely my situation.†

At this point members of the Andrews' crew were emerging from their cover armed with torches.

They spread themselves thinly enough that marksmen aboard the ship and on the ground were able to take down only a very few men. As they reached the sides of the Andrews they set it aflame. The wooden ship was engulfed within minutes mostly due to its ruptured gasoline tanks. The flames panicked the animals that remained connected to the sledge. They threw off their riders who were then crushed beneath the flaming wreckage as the terrified beasts hauled it over them. To my surprise, I was able to keep the creature I rode under control. It was better trained than I might have hoped and had the advantage of not being linked to an eighty five ton bonfire.

Out of the huge Cloud Master ship came what looked like a flock of birds. Due to the distance, it was hard to make out exactly what I was seeing. They looked a little like boomerangs with a line attached to the center with some thing hanging. Something small.

As they banked for a turn in perfect formation, the scale of what I witnessed became apparent. the tiny thing at the end of the line was a man.

It was a buoyant aerodynamic surface attached by a cable to a harness. The man in the harness controlled the movements of the wing by shifting his weight. Lighter lines were connected to control surfaces that determined the attitude and speed of these stripped down contrivances.

The men at the controls were armed, but surprisingly not with guns. Each pilot carried a long sword with a curved barb halfway along its five foot length. Had I a pistol, I believe that there would have been little for me to worry about but, alas, I was armed with only the sword from my dress uniform.

The wing men bore down upon me in a line with the clear intention of cutting me down from my mount. Some of them veered off to other areas in the vicinity where they might find targets among the torch bearers

Pandemonium was the rule of the day as trumpeting, stampeding dinosaurs strewed flaming wreckage everywhere.

I was engaged by first one wing man then another, wielding my sword with one hand as I reigned in the animal with the other. Each individual engagement lasted only a few seconds as a wing man would swoop past me. It was my great good fortune that I had excelled at fencing as a youth for all of that skill was being called upon today. The great length of the Bromfkidoran swords kept me from landing any effective blows against my opponents in my first two engagements, but the third man made an error which allowed me to cut the cable that suspended him from his wing depositing him roughly on my mount's back. I wasted not a second placing the point of my blade against his throat as I appropriated his. Having secured one of the long swords, I kicked the man off the back of the great striped beast who promptly trampled him underfoot.

Now that I was better armed, the odds were somewhat evened. It became quickly evident that the hooked extension on the blade was for cutting control or suspension cables, a task for which it was admirably suited. I had goaded the animal into motion toward my own party who I now hoped to rejoin, thus forcing the wing men to follow. By poking my mount with the tip of my sword, I was able to convince it to go at a gallop which for a creature with twelve foot legs was fast indeed. Again and again the winged swordsmen descended upon me and again and again I fought them off. My right arm had become soaked to the elbow with the spilled blood of my adversaries. My mount was now bolting in panic

and one way or another I would soon have to dismount. Ahead was a stand of trees where the wing men could not follow but the creature would also be slowed a great deal.

Holding for dear life to the reigns, I used them to swing outward to the ground where I landed tumbling end over end only narrowly missing impaling myself on my own blade. I had done so close enough to the trees that the wing men found themselves entangled in the branches of the trees that were then bowled over by the terrorized dinosaur who indiscriminately pounded wood and wing men alike to smithereens. Behind me was a muddy field strewn with flaming wreckage, flattened bodies and screaming beasts. The gigantic skyship was now heading north, most likely for Punta Arenas. The events I have just described took place in only a few minutes.

Hammond arrived at my side and helped me to my feet.

"Subtle." he said with irritating irony.

On the field we were able to collect some swords and guns as well as a few of the one man wings. My ship was gone but not my command, her crew was now an army. We would not be well enough armed to take Punta Arenas, not by quite a long shot. I would have to bring my command north of the Santa Cruz and harass the enemy along the way.

It *sounded* easy.

*Admiral Wyley never names these creatures in his text, but there is reasonable certainty that they were "montoradnaj", the largest animal of Bromfkidor. They are only rarely domesticated.

† Although Admiral Wyley refers to these animals as "dinosaurs," biologists prefer to hold the avisaura as a separate group distinct from the dinosaurs. This, however is a subject of great controversy even at the end of the twentieth century. The issues center around metabolism which most paleontologists insist was exothermic ("cold blooded") in the dinosaura but is very clearly endothermic ("warm blooded") in the avisaura. Those scientists who do not hold with this view are thought to be hopeless radicals.

Chapter Four

North of the Santa Cruz

Two weeks had now passed since the Andrews was shot down in Palmiroj. My tiny "army" and I had marched one hundred miles to the Rio Gallagos just beyond the Argentine border. In that time we had encountered several abandoned towns but only a very few grays, two lone men that we didn't let see us and one patrol ship that Hammond brought down by flying up to it on one of the single man wings and disabling its engines and setting it aflame. No doubt the crew thought it was some kind of accident.

It would be required for us to cover an additional one hundred miles to reach the Santa Cruz. So far all the roads that we had encountered had been torn up and there were no railways this far south, so we had to make our way through the country side entirely on foot. Hammond hoped that we might capture a skyship, but I didn't feel that we were well enough armed and besides, we had seen only one on the entire journey.

The closer we got to the banks of the Santa Cruz, the more reports I got of strange sightings. Strange sightings of little brown men.

Three days after I heard the first rumor, one of these fellows walked out of the night and into the light of my fire escorted by a pair of bemused skymen from my command.

He was about five feet three inches tall, but carried himself with almost regal bearing. He wore a Colombian sky captain's uniform with a few modifications. For one thing, instead of the regulation cap, he sported a slightly pointed hood which was emblazoned with the golden condor of Greater Colombia. He grandly introduced himself as Captain Huascar Garza of the skyship *Koricancha* in the service of El Presidente Juan Edgar Bolivar y Van Der Kassel of Gran Colombia.

His face bore the small eyes, high cheekbones and aquiline nose that marked him as an Andean.

It was evident to me that it was members of this man's crew which had been "haunting" my crew.

"Captain," I asked, "why did you and your men not make your presence known to us earlier?"

"My ship is camouflaged near a gulch just this side of the Santa Cruz. We knew that your ship had gone down and formulated a plan to save you and as many of your men as we could. In order to do this I had to assign a small detail of men to locate your party. They were instructed to report to me before taking any action."

A rather theatrically canny man, this Garza. He came out of the interesting military skyman tradition of Colombia. When Colombia had its second great expansion in which it incorporated both Peru and Bolivia in the 1860's, the nation gained as citizens the people who would become its greatest soldiers of the sky.

These men were from Qosqo in the Andes mountains of the Colombian far west and were descendants of the once mighty Incas. The Greater Colombian government chose these particular people to become the cream of their air force because they had lived all their lives at high altitudes. In spite of their small stature, these flyers were so adept at their work that they were famous the world over. The air force academy at Qosqo was regarded as one of the most difficult schools of its type in all the world.

We went with captain Garza about three miles to the north. My charts showed that we were a short distance from the town of Esperanza. The *Koricancha* sat in a rocky field near the side of a gulch. It had been painted to match the surrounding landscape so perfectly that it had to be pointed out to me. She was not made to accommodate as many people as all one hundred and sixty- seven remaining of my crew and would have to make it back across the lines at very low altitude. The reason that the *Koricancha* was selected for this mission was its speed, but with this load both its speed and stability would be compromised.

Ahead of us was a journey of about sixty miles to the nearest friendly installation, the American base at Lago Viedma.

Sunrise was approaching as we prepared to raise ship. Captain Garza was hoping to make the base in about an hour and a half even though the ship felt a bit unsteady. Almost as soon as the ship was airborne, the helmsman called to the captain that he had spotted a ship.

"A dreadnought," said Hammond in my ear, "it will be able to easily outrun us."

I resisted the urge to snap at him. "Perhaps you should tell captain Garza what you can about it."

I called to my own men to brace themselves for evasive maneuvers just as the first one toppled most of them. The dreadnought had turned toward us and captain Garza called for a full about which had set the overloaded ship to pitching back and forth.

At first, the dreadnought didn't fire but approached to see if we might be taken without damage. The Bromfkidorans wanted badly to get their hands on our wireless and gyroscope. They wanted equally badly to be able to look at the construction of our gas cells and gasoline engines.

It was almost inevitable that sooner or later in this conflict the grays would capture a ship intact and delve its mysteries. Even so, the allies saw it as essential that that time come as much later as possible.

The huge dirigible was bearing down on us at an uncomfortable rate and we were soon in its shadow. The captain called for more speed but to no avail, the extra weight born by the ship made our present velocity its highest speed.

First one line then another dropped from the gigantic disc-shaped ship. We had but a single recourse.

I seized the long Bromfkidoran blade and alerted the men under my command to gather behind the upper hatches. On my word over one hundred men and I swarmed up the lines that the enemy had planned to use to board us.

The Bromfkidorans, being people of intelligence and no doubt believing us to be the same, never suspected that we would so dangerously overload a ship.

Although the grays outnumbered us, it was not by nearly as much as they suspected, thus we had surprise on our side. Further, they were reluctant to use firearms on board ship lest they ignite the hydrogen which provided buoyancy for the vast dreadnought. One spark and the entire ship would be consumed within a few seconds. Over a period of a few minutes we had first twenty-five, then fifty, then a hundred men aboard the enemy ship!

I swung my sword in wide bloody arcs, cutting down men like weeds before a scythe. The men had improvised weapons of various types, mostly bludgeons and knives, but they still did deadly work.

Hammond had come, despite my orders to the contrary, and had proven to be useful by pointing the way to the bridge. In short order the Americans had gained control of the ship's helm but there were still small battles being fought all over. I turned the great ship north and called for full speed. I had to draw a drop or two of blood from the throat of the gray helmsman before he would comply with the order.

Lord Hammond was translating all of my orders into Bromfkidoran which sounded very natural coming from him. I remembered that he had married a gray and probably spoke it at home at least part of the time.

The small Colombian ship rapidly pulled out ahead of us as we both crossed the waters of the Santa Cruz and left us behind now that it had been relieved of the extra weight it had been burdened with. I realized that the *Koricancha* was heading for Lago Viedma to get reinforcements to secure our tenuous control of the Bromfkidoran dreadnought. We would not be able to hold sway over the ship for more than a few minutes before those of its crew who remained live and free reorganized enough to seize the bridge back from us.

Hammond used the on board fartalk to make sure that the engine rooms were secure and then broadcast a message throughout the ship for the grays to stop fighting and they would be well treated. I received no evidence of their being convinced. The helmsman seemed to be positive that he would be killed sooner or later, perhaps this is how they treated prisoners and expected the same from us.

When I asked, Hammond said that they would most likely view our actions as treason, for they saw us as Bromfkidorans in rebellion, and therefore would treat us as traitors.

"What is the Bromfkidoran penalty for treason?" I asked.

"Death." said Woodrow Hammond.

I thought that given this view, they must see us as very desperate men who would stop at nothing. In their view, we had rejected the very basics of civilization and might do anything at all. I suppose that my display of swordsmanship when taking the ship might have been construed as the excessive act of a violent man. Hammond had said as much, but these gray barbarians had to be shown that Americans cannot be trifled with.

The *Koricancha* reappeared from the north with three American ships close behind. One of the U.S. ships fired a warning shot over our heads. We brought the captured dreadnought to a stop and allowed ourselves to be boarded by American skymen.

We were safe at last.

Chapter Five

The Captain's Lament

The grays were placed in pens and Hammond summoned a specialist from San Francisco to deal with them. He would arrive in a few days.

These Bromfkidorans seemed so very sure of their fate that they made no attempt either to escape or to cooperate. They were resolved to die with honor.

Their ship was named *Sorad'Alina* and it had been the most advanced of its class before they had been superseded by the Cloud Master type ships. Hammond wanted the ship for California, he argued that they were best equipped to study it. Garza insisted that it must go to Colombia but I pointed out that this was an American base and the capture had been made by American troops. The ship was towed north for Havana in the U.S. the next morning.

I was given but a short time to bask in my triumph, the president, via telegraph, informed me that I, in cooperation with officers from other American powers, was to lead a mission into Bromfkidor. Our goal was to be contacting leading citizens and convincing them that continued pursuit of this conflict would only lead to the ruin of their civilization. At the same time, we were to establish a defensible base within the Republic of Bromfkidor.

I set to work selecting my command crew from a list of officers provided to me by the state department as well as a few "volunteers" whom I was instructed were to be included. To my chagrin, one of these was the Baron of Monterey.

The day after I received my orders Hammond's expert arrived.

His name was Dzhidro Alprendauro and he was as gray as they come. He was the presumed dead brother of the messenger aboard the *Andrews*. My understanding was that this man was a leading citizen of California, president of CSC and a native Bromfkidoran by birth.

Alprendauro spoke perfect English with a Californian accent but would blithely throw in Bromfkidoran words whenever he started speaking fast. He sounded like an inept spy. Hammond recommended this man to me for our mission. He had served with distinction aboard a Bromfkidoran vessel. I agreed to give him a position on the mission.

Although he was not on the list, I requested captain Huascar Garza as my second in command and the Colombian government obliged by making him free of duties for the mission.

The Argentines recommended a Lieutenant named Kiyotimink Shilchan* who was born in the occupied territory of Tierra Del Fuego. His people were called Ona and he wore the standard issue uniform with a skull cap of guanaco fur which was part of his people's distinctive garb. He was a small, brown-skinned man who's bearing made him seem larger. he was a warrior and like his people, he still preferred

the longbow over the gun.

Although I would command the mission, Brazil was providing the ship and its captain. It was the huge and experimental "*Pinzon*" under the command of Santos-Dumont. Within its hull it would house two smaller ships, one Californian and one from the U.S.A., the Californian being captained by another Bromfkidoran named Homar Mekeiro, the American by Robert E. Howard of Texas.

From Chile came the radio man, Ramon O'Leary, and from Uruguay came master engineer, Jose Giro. Other officers and crewmen originated from Canada, Mexico and the Dominican Republic creating a truly "American" crew.

Fully half of the crew spoke Spanish as a first, and in some cases only, language. There were also those who spoke Portuguese, Quechua, Ona and Bromfkidoran. For this reason, and no other I assure you, I found it convenient to have Woodrow Hammond by my side most of the time during preparations for the mission.

Captain Santos-Dumont spent all of his time with his crew and fussing with technical matters. I almost had to make appointments to see him.

President Wilson sent a group of men along who's purpose I wasn't sure of. They were a group of scientists of various disciplines headed up by two men from the Dilmount Institute in Mulweeno, Doctor Alexander Rodman Mollot, Inventor of the dimension warping device which brought me to this world and Doctor Nikola Tesla, a tall Croatian immigrant who was the U.S.A.'s leading authority on advanced electrical applications.

This party was quartered on a rear storage deck and I, quite frankly, forgot all about them.

At a meeting of senior officers a few days before departure, I had asked for suggestions as to a possible sight for us to set up our base within Bromfkidor. Mister Alprendauro had a few ideas for places in the Outer Waste, but it sounded like the environment there was so hostile that a long term occupation might prove impractical.

It was then that Woodrow Hammond revealed that he owned a large estate in Bromfkidor.

"Harro's blood, Woody, I had all but forgotten!" Cried Alprendauro.

"Lord Hammond," I asked, "how is it that you came to own property in Bromfkidor?"

He seemed a little embarrassed. "I am married to a very wealthy Bromfkidoran woman who was the head of her family. The society of her homeland is such that wealth is controlled principally by men and by custom all of a woman's wealth becomes her husband's to dispose of as he wishes. When I took her out of Bromfkidor we lost access to her fortune, but I have learned that the family has kept up the estate and recognizes me as the family patriarch. As Prince Consort of the house of Sharomna of Pojona I will offer the use of the estate of Nomchit Sharomna for our base of operations."

I had to admit that this sounded like a real possibility.

"Do you believe that we would be able to reach this place without incident?"

"California and Great Britain have a cooperative base in the Antipodes Islands to the south of New Zealand. Nomchit Sharomna lies very close to the edge of the Outer Waste on the Molad river. The part of that empty region that is nearest our goal is very infrequently patrolled by the military and can be reached in a short time from the Antipodes."

"This is true," said Alprendauro, "the region of the Ross Ice Shelf, know to Bromfkidorans as the Eastern Ice is little explored. I believe that even a ship the size of the *Pinzon* could cross it unseen. Only a small portion of inhabited land would have to be traversed to reach Nomchit Sharomna."

"It sounds to me," I said, "like this will be the easiest course to follow. I assume that the Baron will be able to make I would like to see us underway in two weeks time."

Five days later found me aboard a Californian ship in the South Pacific just a few miles north of the Antipodes. The largest island was our destination and its shore was covered with at least ten thousand seals. The noise of our engines sent them all dashing into the water whipping it into a white foam.

The center of the island was dominated by a large hill with the grandiose name of Mount Galloway.

The base was built atop Mount Galloway in the Bromfkidoran mode with a huge mast newly installed to accommodate the gigantic *D.B.Pinzon*[†] which had arrived the day before.

The smaller Californian ship docked below in the shadow of huge Brazilian vessel.

When I set foot on the ground I was met by Mister O'Leary who was installing the main wireless station which would communicate directly with our ships and our base within enemy territory.

I was settled into an office near the radio room which had a large map of the Antarctic regions on the wall with a liberal supply of pins. On the desk sat three telephones one of which was a direct line to Santos-Dumont on the bridge of the *Pinzon*.

I wasted three days in this little room conferring with a staff who all knew already what they were going to do. We were all itching to get underway.

The *Pinzon* flew over the tossing sea with an easy grace. Never in my life had I seen such a steady vessel, had the allies twenty ships like this, the Cloud Masters would be no threat. As it was, this ship, impressive as it might be, would have to stand alone against a mighty nation.

During the trip, I finally got the chance to speak at length with captain Santos-Dumont. On our first night out I requested that he dine with me. He accepted, but insisted that we dine in his quarters, served by his personal chef. In the U.S. the military way of life was somewhat more simple. My sense of the contrast was reinforced when I saw his cabin.

"Victorian" was the word which came to my mind when I saw it. The room was hung with velvet curtains and the walls bore paintings in ornate frames. There was actually an organ against one wall next to a small table bearing a silver tea service.

The man himself was not as big as his surroundings seemed to imply, although he had worn every

medal he had ever earned with the amazing dress uniform of the Brazilian Aeroforce. It was obvious that this little man had big ideas. I was reminded of some Machiavellian character from a Jules Verne novel.

"Commodore Wyley," he said gesturing to a comfortable looking easy chair, "come in, please be seated."

"Thank you very much captain Santos-Dumont." I sat down, the chair was every bit as comfortable as it looked.

"My crew refers to me merely as captain Santos. You may do so as well. I am pleased to have you as a guest in my quarters."

He seemed so stiff and formal without any real warmth or cordiality. He played the host in a mechanical manner.

The dinner was remarkable, Argentine veal with asparagus in hollandaise and wild rice served with a fine Californian wine.

I wanted to get to know Santos, become friends with him if possible, for it was he of all people on this mission that I had to depend on.

Our conversation throughout dinner was light, regarding management of the ship but after the cognac and cigars were broken out he relaxed a little.

"You know, commodore," he said, "I hate the Bromfkidorans."

I was taken aback by his abrupt expression of sentiment. I answered, "I assure you that they aren't my best friends either."

"You do not understand, sir. I hate them. They stole from me what was mine by right. I was going to give the world the dirigible airship."

"I had heard that you had made a few somewhat primitive experiments in lighter tha..."

He cut me off, rising from his chair and coloring as red as Satan himself. "You," he said waving a finger in my startled face, "have No idea..." He tried to calm down. "Excuse me, sir, but you have no idea how close I was. Within a few decades I could have shown the world wonders even greater than those that emerged from that provincial backwater of humanity!"

"I'm game," I said nervously, "tell me about it."

Santos-Dumont poured himself more cognac and then as an afterthought, offered me some.

When I was young," he began, "my father sent me to Paris to learn how to be a man. He believed that it was the most dangerous of places for a young man with a lot of money to be. If I could pass this particular trial of fire, he believed, I would have accomplished something momentous.

"To the his surprise, I was lured more by fast automobiles than fast women. More prone to get drunk

on the heights reached in the basket of a balloon than on wine.

"Do you know that I built my own balloon that I could carry with me in the rumble seat of my car and made ascensions all over Europe? I started to work on the problem of a steerable motorized balloon. I made hundreds of tests of shapes of envelopes. I did an experiment that involved hanging a motorcycle from a tree to test the vibration of the motor out of contact

with the ground.

"In '98, I made my first directed flight although it was not without its problems. I had to be guided home like a kite by some school boys.

"Isn't it strange how things that we think have no connection to our lives can end up being pivotal to our fate. I had heard rumors of a lost civilization having been discovered, but that seemed to have little bearing on my work.

"My ships grew bigger and better and I became the toast of Paris, a circumstance which was much to my liking. I was gay and flamboyant. Even in defeat I made sure that I would be talked about. After a terrible crash in a tree, I asked my rescuers for a glass of beer before I was down. On another occasion a hydrogen filled ship exploded. Those who came to find my body were treated to the sight of me sitting on a window ledge calmly smoking a cigarette. Both success and failure increased my reputation in this way until '03 when Woodrow Hammond crashed a true skyship in southern Patagonia.

"A month later, it was as if I had never existed. The skyships of Bromfkidor had stolen my thunder. At first, I blamed Hammond but I realized that at that time he could not possibly have behaved any differently. The Bromfkidorans, on the other hand, were another matter. Not only had they destroyed my life's work, they also harbored desires for world conquest.

"I obtained a job with the California Skyship Corporation as an engineer and learned all I could. A year later back in Rio, I started my own operation. My family had strong connections with the government. Brazil formed its Aeroforce a month before California founded its own.

"Hammond's skyship works stayed steadily ahead of mine for the first four years but by 1907, AeroBrasil Ltd. had introduced designs unlike any others.

"My recognition in the world community was still not what it might have been, they had taken it from me, and eventually they would pay!"

I had gotten the feeling as he spoke that Santos-Dumont might not be in his right mind. I felt cold when he expressed his irrational hate for the grays.

As soon as was polite, I noted the late hour and said my good night.

* His surname translated as "soft Voice and he was in fact one of the least boisterous men I have ever known.

†D.B.= Dirigabile Brasil

Chapter Six

Spy

I am certain that there were much more than one million penguins on the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf. Every so often, as if of one mind, the entire nation-sized flock would run for the waves in orderly lines and then plunge into the frigid water. Suddenly their awkwardness on land is replaced by their extraordinary grace in the water. The crystal clear ocean revealed that these birds had not forgotten the art of flight but had merely moved it to a new medium. In the water they flew revealing their true avian nature as they hunted the millions of small fish which crowded these waters. They, in their turn, were hunted by sea lions who would ambush them in the shadowy depths.

The ice shelf itself was of such a stark whiteness that the eye had trouble determining detail. Even at our altitude this whiteness extended all the way to the horizon.

Santos, Hammond and I stood on the upper deck of the *Pinzon* swathed in deep fur parkas looking toward the far southern horizon. We were comparing our chart to the landscape and noting changes to be made. Ahead of us lay a journey of a little more than six hundred miles, mostly over ice, until we made landing at Nomchit Sharomna. We charted a course which would insure that only sixty miles of that journey would actually be within the Republic of Bromfkidor. Luck of our goal's location had it that we would also not have to cross any mountains and thus rise so high in the sky that we might be spotted from tens of miles away.

Eight hours later, from the bridge, I spotted a patch of blue in the sky near the horizon and in that patch of blue I saw birds.

"Birds?" I asked Hammond.

"Daurodnaj, avoid them. They are flying avisaur. The daurodna lives at the edge of the Outer Waste where they can ride on the rising currents of warm air. They grow huge feeding on the corpses of animals and men who get lost out there. The daurodna, with a wingspan of forty feet, is the biggest natural thing in the sky and they get their moisture by flying through clouds where it condenses on their skin and hair. They lick it from each other's bodies. They have an instinct to fly into anything large they see in the sky as they assume that it is a cloud.

Not knowing this is how I once lost a ship in this land. Dozens of them threw themselves at our hull and into our engines. Eight good men were lost in the crash. Avoid them."

This was the first time that I was grateful for the Baron's habit of telling me more than I wanted to know about something. I called to the helm, "Come in well below that flock of bir...avisaur."

The sky around us gradually shaded from gray into blue, the earth from white into brown, then green. A forest of umbrella pines now dominated the landscape. Avisaur of various types and size made their way amongst the trees as tiny flyers filled the air with their songs.

We were in Bromfkidor.

To hear about this land in no way prepares one to actually experience it. I still regarded it in the back of my mind as some kind of fairy tale until I had actually seen it with my own eyes. This hidden country was made even more wondrous by its very improbability, this land of blue skies and lakes. Mountains and forests. A land of secrets and adventure.

Shortly after we made this transition the Molad river came into view, a silver ribbon against the green. It didn't take us long to spot Nomchit Sharomna, a vast manicured estate standing out from the wild land which surrounded it.

The great house was an immense structure surmounted by a dome over the central hall. This was a palace that had been erected two and a half centuries earlier in the years following the Convention of Establishment. The great house was surrounded by more than twenty other buildings of varying size. More than just a family estate, this was a little city which served as the capital of a clan which extended over all of the "stoma"¹ of Pojona. The house of Sharomna had been the last ruling family of the land of Pojona before the chaos which led to the Formation War. The Baron of Monterey had the great good fortune of marrying into this important (and very rich) family.

We were aware that our sudden appearance in the sky might cause apprehension among the residents so I decided to send Hammond down to the surface in a drop-pod with a portable wireless telegraph set. It took almost an hour, but we finally got the signal to pull up to the mast at the edge of the estate and dock the ship.

A group of officers and myself went to the surface where we were greeted by Hammond and a very handsome young man who was several inches taller than Hammond. The youth was a gray, of course, and had a regal bearing and poise beyond his years.

"This," said Hammond, "is Ferthijan do Sharomna, my brother-in-law. He is the younger brother of my wife Ola Sharomna and the local head of the family. He speaks no language but Bromfkidoran and Pojojan² so he has asked me to welcome you in his name and to inform you that he has stepped aside as head of the household while I am in residence."

It started to dawn on me that the Baron was a very rich man in this country, even more so than he was in California where he had amassed a great fortune through his introduction of the skyship to that part of the world. I was a little concerned about his loyalties when I saw that he had a large family and fortune here. I had to discipline myself to understand that our war was against the expansionist policies of the king and government of this land, not the great mass of its people.

The next two weeks saw us installed in several of the buildings of Nomchit Sharomna. I had the ship landed in a large field about a half mile from the estate so it would not be too readily visible.

Alprendauro took it upon himself to give me language lessons, spending an hour a day with me

pointing to and naming things. Later I was introduced to the cumbersome alphabet of Bromfkidor. To my misfortune, I did not possess the aptitude for language that Hammond had. He said that he picked up the basics in about a week, I never developed very good pronunciation or grammar and to this day grays smile when they hear my version of their mother tongue.

Nonetheless, in a short time, I found that I was able to make myself understood at least in a limited fashion.

One remarkable thing was that I found myself rather enjoying the company of Alprendauro. He was full of good humor and amusing anecdotes. He struck me as a civilized and educated man, not at all fitting my vision of the gray man. This man was no imperialist and my fears concerning him eased.

In that same period of time the sylvan estate was in the process of being transformed into a military base. Ferthijan do Sharomna had had all explained to him by Hammond, but was still worried at what might result from Nomchit Sharomna sheltering an invading force. Honestly, I could not bring myself to tell him that he had nothing to fear, for I knew that he did.

Those fears were to be realized a few days later.

I was just on the verge of waking when my aide burst into my room shouting that we had captured a spy.

The man sat in a chair in the library of the great house looking dejected. He looked more or less like an average gray with a few exceptions. He was dressed in bright and gaudy clothing adorned with silver buckles and grommets. His long hair was black rather than the more typical brown or red found among these people and he wore a full beard rather than the more commonly seen mustache. Although the hair and beard were liberally peppered with gray, he was huge and burly and obviously still in his prime.

Hammond appeared in the room behind me. "A Kozar," he said in Bromfkidoran, "and a tough looking one at that."

I turned to the Baron and asked, "What the devil is a Kozar? and please speak English."

He answered, persisting in Bromfkidoran. "They are the last nomads of this land, making their way by trading and sometimes stealing."

The man shot his eyes at Hammond and spoke. "Woodrow Hammond," he said hotly, "you know that I am no thief! Why do you wrong me so cruelly?" Curiously, he then started laughing.

"You know this man?" I asked in ungrammatical Bromfkidoran.

Hammond replied, "His name is Halord Bishindi, He is a very good friend of mine. He is no spy, you can bank on that."

The Kozar turned to Hammond and asked, "Who is the baby-talking white man?"

"He is Commodore Wendell Wyley, He is in charge of our mission here. The war has begun, Halord, they invaded us, here is where we will fight back from."

"Lord Hammond," I protested, "please do not reveal anything that he need not know to this man!"

Hammond turned to me with a face as threatening and black as

a swollen thunderhead. "This man has saved my life several times.

He is entitled to, and has, my complete trust. Assuming that I have yours, there should be no problem here, right?"

"Right..." I said. It was clear to me now, that Hammond was in charge here whether or not I headed the mission. "So, Partner³ Bishindi," I said, "to what do we owe the honor of your visit?" Actually, that is what I wish I had been able to say. What I said in reality was, "What you do be here Partner Bishindi?"

He laughed, "I saw a strange ship in the sky. I have learned that this is a sure sign that my dear friend Woodrow Hammond is near. That why me be here."

"Halord," said Lord Hammond, "you need the Commodore as a friend, you should not mock him."

"I am most sorry Commodore Wyley," said Bishindi, "it will not happen again. I came because I live for adventure and Woodrow Hammond always brings that into my life. The Kozars have not been traders throughout their history, we are a great warrior people and in me runs the blood of my ancestors!"

A "warrior". I must say that as a military man, I get worried when I hear that term rather than "soldier". Soldiers take orders and practice self discipline. Their behavior is predictable. One who styles himself as a "warrior" is operating on his own agenda, is undisciplined and unpredictable. They can be brilliant fighters but they are utter hell for a commanding officer.

This time having Hammond translate so that there would be no misunderstanding, I spoke to Bishindi. "I admit that it would be to our advantage to have as many Bromfkidorans as possible involved in this operation, but you must understand that if you volunteer, you are under my command."

Bishindi replied, "I am no friend of the king and I am a disciplined man. Please do not insult me by presuming that I don't know how to behave."

Hammond stepped in. "Halord, are the rest of your clan here?"

"Those that were not conscripted. Imagine Conscripting Kozars! Never has the government trusted us with weapons."

This was only the beginning of a long stream of complaints which Bishindi would spew forth that I had no time to listen to. I left the man for Hammond to deal with and headed for my office.

I summoned Garza and Shilchan as well as Santos-Dumont. We were to make our first move very soon and I needed to plan with my officers.

¹The Republic of Bromfkidor, at the time of its discovery, was divided into seven nations, or "stomi" as they are known in the native language. They are, Pojona, Mekhrandur, B'Dobna, Bizaich, Brant, Ranse and Keld.

² The original national language of Pojona.

³"Partner" is the common Bromfkidoran honorific used for both men and women to whom no other title applies.

Chapter Seven

Thirty Seconds

The weeks we had spent at Nomchit Sharomna, while overloaded with work for the command crew, were very dull for the average skyman. The young bucks of the crew, ever creative, sought ways to fill the idle hours. They made friends with one another. They sketched, whittled, knitted, hunted and wandered in the little village. They drank with the local young men and they flirted with the local young women. The Bromfkidorans taught them songs and they taught the Bromfkidorans baseball which both groups played incessantly. They also brawled and gambled until Hammond put a stop to it. I was a little taken aback that most of the crew now spoke Bromfkidoran far better than I. Because our men were of international origin, I noticed that it became a frequently used tongue among the crew being that it was the language they had in common.

Our first mission would be to cut fartalk¹ lines between the capital city of Tippilina and the lands of the upper Molad. Having done that, we would head up river destroying anything military we could find. As we raised ship I heard from members of my crew a song which had been adapted from the Bromfkidoran to become an American sky shanty. These were rough voices of rough men. They sang as they set the propellers and they sang as they stretched the gas cells and primed the engines and as

I heard their voices in unison from all over the ship I knew that these men from all over the Americas had grown into a single team who could act as one when they were called upon to do so.

"I left my crying mother,

I left the family farm,

I left my scolding father,

I left my true love's arms.

*She told me I'd be sorry,
She said "Johnny don't run away,
You'll only find a world of hurt,
and return to me one day."
Up ship, Johnny!
Up and away,
Fly away, Johnny,
Return to her one day.
A lass in San Francisco,
A lass in London town,
A lass in New York City,
A lass the whole world 'round.
A lass a sweet as honey
A lass as bright as day,
Alas, took all my money,
and then she run away.
Up ship, Johnny
Wind 'neath your feet
Fly away, Johnny,
Again we'll never meet."*

The verses were endless, some of them originally Bromfkidoran, it was clear, and others distinctly American.

For the first time in this mission, I felt that this was my crew and that they were bound to the purpose that had united our respective nations for it.

The sky was calling. Ever since my first day in the sky under the tutelage of Orville Wright the sky has breathed a rejuvenating wind into my soul.

The song of the skymen infused my being with a sense of purpose for my calling.

The *Pinzon* lifted into the perfect blue, cloud spotted sky.

We headed up river about fifty miles to a place where three fartalk lines converged to one high and massive tower and thence led down river to the capital city. We were here to destroy this tower which connected the entire stoma of Keld and a small portion of the stoma of Ranse with Tippilina, the seat of the empire.

This was a tactic that the grays were using in Patagonia and the only reason it would work for us would be due to the fact that our presence in this country was unknown.

We had learned from wireless communication that the allies had been thus far unable to recapture southern Patagonia and that they had in fact moved the frontier farther north. The King had sent a governor to what they were now referring to as the stoma of Pata Gona². The cloud master ships had allowed them to seize that land and hold onto it. Further advances had been more difficult since the allies had been alerted.

This was also going to be our problem the instant our presence was discovered.

Santos was preparing the gunnery crew to fire a shot at the base of the tower when a frantic call came from the observation dome. A dreadnought of the Bromfkidoran sky navy had appeared from up river making its way along the valley. There was no question that they had seen us. I told Santos-Dumont to issue the firing order and in three seconds the tower toppled in a ball of flame severing the fartalk lines from three directions as the Bromfkidoran ship sped toward us. our ship, having accomplished its mission, The *Pinzon* turned as fast as could be managed but the maneuver cost us valuable time. The Bromfkidoran ship gained on our position.

I cursed under my breath, we had been caught with our proverbial pants down. I could no afford to lose the *Pinzon* in our first confrontation so I made a desperate decision.

The *Pinzon* carried several small scout vessels aboard equipped with a wireless and light weaponry. Grabbing a few items, I shouted to Santos that he was now in charge of the mission and bolted for the nearest hangar section.

The scout ship was forty feet long, shaped like a fat arrowhead and designed to carry two men at high speed. She was fitted with two motors, one a powerful gasoline engine, the other electric and undetectable to the ear except at very close range. Instead of a second man, I filled the other seat with food and firearms as well as the sword that I took from the wingman in Patagonia. I expected to be separated from the rest of my party for some time.

I jumped into the cockpit of the tiny ship and started the silent electric motor, departing the *Pinzon* seconds later. I telegraphed the bridge to instruct Santos to return to Nomchit Sharomna as swiftly as possible. His reply, while filled with invective, was thankfully not insubordinate.

I predicted to myself that I had about ten to twenty seconds before I was shot down, I had only to make the best possible use of the time allotted me.

Five seconds.

The little scout vessel was faster than either the *Pinzon* or her pursuer and as I started the gas engine, the Bromfkidoran ship found me very close to them before they had even fully realized my presence. Men on its upper deck discharged rifles at me without finding their mark. I fired back with a pistol through my side window bringing down one of the gunmen.

Ten seconds.

As I banked around the ship's port side it turned its weapons toward me. For the moment, I still had surprise on my side, the crew of the Bromfkidoran vessel were still adapting to my sudden appearance.

Thirteen seconds.

Taking as careful aim as I could, I fired my pistol again and again directly at the control bridge of the ship. I was too close for them to return fire at me and at the same time I kept them totally distracted from taking aim at the *Pinzon*.

Fifteen seconds.

With the speed of a rocket I was now heading for the front wind screen of the vast ship's bridge.

Sixteen seconds.

Some of the men had placed their hands on firearms and were bringing them to bear on me.

Seventeen seconds.

Their first shots shattered the forward windscreen and filled my ship with many punctures. One shot found my gyro and destroyed it. I started to spin out of control.

Nineteen seconds.

I saw the whites of the captain's eyes as he rose from his seat, a look of horror on his face.

Twenty-one seconds.

I crashed through the windscreen annihilating the great ship's control center.

Thirty seconds.

I was emerging from the wreckage of the little ship bruised and battered when I found myself looking down the barrel of a large bore pistol which was in the hand of a disheveled officer. He was unaware that the arm which was still inside the ship had a sword. I took a deep breath and moved as quickly as possible, swinging the sword in a short arc which passed through the man's wrist. Both gun and severed hand fell to the floor.

Gasoline was leaking from the broken wreck which was once my ship and I knew that it was only a matter of seconds before it ignited. As quickly as I could I stripped the uniform from the body of a dead

crewman and put it on. I smeared my face with oil which had leaked from my motor to darken my face and left the screaming officer as I bolted from the bridge to seek a way off the ship.

The crew paid me little attention for they had larger problems. Without a control center, the ship was adrift and the crew completely involved in restoring control. I was able to make my way to the lowest deck unnoticed.

I heard a loud, low pitched **THUMP** from the forward end of the ship which I knew was the forward gas cell exploding. Looking out below, I saw the burning remains of the fartalk tower on the bank of the river growing closer as the ship pitched over. I looked around desperately for some way off the ship when I was ejected by the complete and sudden explosion of the vessel.

Clothes and hair in flames, I plummeted toward the river, to my certain extinction.

¹ The literal translation of the name for a device that the Bromfkidorans use for distant voice communication. the equivalent of a telephone.

² By chance, the name Patagonia sounds like the Bromfkidoran words "patan"-neck and "gona"-long. The Bromfkidorans thought the name was evocative of the long-necked guanacos that inhabit the region.

Chapter Eight

Historical Notes

The writings collected in this chapter do not originate with the Wyley manuscript. They were gleaned from other sources, some in private libraries, some widely published.

I found my copy of Tesla's notebooks in a bargain "Buck a Book" store. The letters and journals of Woodrow Hammond are to be found in the Californian National Archive and I drew heavily on them for my book "Black Pirate of the Lost World," my recent biography of him. Some items are to be found in Bromfkidoran histories of the conflict.

From the Journal of Woodrow Hammond

November 26th 1914

The *Pinzon* lifted yesterday on a mission to sever fartalk lines into Keld and western Ranse. They were gone for only about eight hours, so I had assumed that all had gone smoothly. I spent some time, starting a

few hours after they left, dialing random locations in Keld until the calls stopped going through.

When the ship came back into line of sight, we received a message that the mission was accomplished but commodore Wyley had been lost diverting the attention of a Bromfkidoran ship. The crew of the *Pinzon* had seen the ship explode soon after he had boarded it. Escape would have been impossible.

We are going to have to telegraph for new instructions. He was the mission commander and as this is an international effort, it is not totally clear who takes over for him. Garza, the little Colombian, is second in command, but I suspect that because the U.S. bankrolled the bulk of this expedition, their president will expect one of their own to be appointed.

To complicate matters, captain Santos-Dumont has been locked in his cabin playing the organ and seeing no one. He is a strange and bitter man. He is also a genius so he must be watched constantly.

Our enterprise will remain at a standstill as long as these conditions persist.

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Our enterprise will remain at a standstill as long as these conditions persist.

Address before the combined

Parliament of the Republic

of Bromfkidor by his Majesty

Buerno Montolla, King of the Republic

Helmarth 42nd 1596

(November 27th 1914)

I will come directly to the point. The central lands of the world have been attacked by the combined efforts of Beyonders and disgruntled adherents of the PreFormation order.

Our intelligence suggests that this is the largest action of the kind ever taken and represents a major threat which our people must rise to in the most aggressive fashion possible. To do this, it is required that those of us who must prosecute this action become educated regarding his action become educated regarding the viewpoints of the enemy.

The Beyonders refer to Bromfkidor and the lands of the Outer Waste as the "continent" of Antarctica.

Beyond the Outer Waste is a great body of water which shields five other such continents. These in turn are broken into multitudes of separate and, for the most part, warring lands each with a unique and sovereign governments. This is the exact situation which brought down civilization before Formation.

We have learned through hard experience to live by a Great Principal which holds as indisputable truth that a world of divergent and diverse nations is doomed to destroy itself. To prevent this our predecessors endowed the world with the perfect government for all, *Stomo Nomchitka do Bromfkidoro*. When the them by the hand in friendship and bring them into the world mainstream. Universally, no matter how much the lives of the citizens might be improved, our government was rejected by the Beyonder lands.

Recently, as a direct result of their rejection of reason, I have ordered the organization into stomi and administrative territories, the lands of the Outer Waste. Also, we have taken the nearest of their lands under administration. This new stoma is known as Pata Gona and already we have provided full employment for the natives.

In spite of this example, every government of the lands known as "America" have risen against us and are now wreaking havoc in southern Pojona and have cut off communications from the southwest. They will be stopped. If necessary, all their lands will be laid waste to establish a lasting peace and universal government.

Notebook of Nikola Tesla

11/27/14

The great president of the United States of America has honored me by selecting me to help my adopted nation's cause. It is a misfortune that Professor Mollot and I had to be instructed by Mister Wilson to keep the details of our purpose here to ourselves.

Professor Mollot's work in parallel resonant fields bears a special relationship to my own work with high frequency currents. Scientists in the United States Air Force thought that the two of us working together might provide a weapon which would place a greater advantage in the hands of the combined American forces.

I have, with his help, developed just such a thing. Rapidly alternating currents, applied to one of Mollot's parallel resonance cells has yielded surprising results.

The study of such rapidly alternating currents is very interesting. Nearly every experiment discloses something new. Many results may, of course, be predicted, but many more are unforeseen. The experimenter makes many interesting observations.

For instance, if the phase plate of a field translator is exposed to such currents when operating and then quickly shifted to a dormant state, a string of discharges combining the characteristics of electricity and static gravity result. These discharges can be elevated to very high, perhaps transluminal, velocities at enormous output energies with the power produced by a standard radio battery. I believe that an artillery shell could be made incorporating one of these devices. Woe be to anything struck by even a very small device powered by such a thing. It is possible that a single ship could be well enough armed to take on the entire Bromfkidoran navy.

In the light of the sudden death of commodore Wyley, it appears that we will have the required developmental period before having to use this theory in combat.

Letter from Rijin Moranda

flight engineer of the

Californian Sky Navy

11/28/14

My Dear Maria,

For the first time in over ten years, I am again in my home land. I thought that I had become wholly Californian, That I had discarded my past. I imagined that my Bromfkidoran background was only a colorful aspect of my personality in my new home.

I was wrong. I am Bromfkidor and Bromfkidor is me. I cannot put my culture behind me but must incorporate it into my new existence.

Maria, what you must know is that I am an outlaw here. A traitor. If I am captured, far worse will happen to me than to any of the native Americans.

We are now stationed at **censored** in **censored** just to the east of **censored**. I was born just **censored censored** from here and would be tempted to contact my family were it not for the danger to them were I to do so. Once this conflict is resolved, I promise that I will take you to meet them.

I hope I will soon be with you again and until that time,

I love you,

Rijin

New York Times

11/27/14

Commodore Wendell Wyley, commander of the Pan-American expeditionary force in Bromfkidor, was killed yesterday in a confrontation with the enemy. The actions which led to his death were taken by him to save an entire ship and crew.

This news was reported by wireless transmission from captain Alberto Santos-Dumont of the Brazilian skyship *Pinzon*.

Lord Woodrow Hammond of California has been placed in temporary command of the mission in spite of protests from president Wilson.

As we go to press, there is heated debate in the senate and the cabinet as to an American replacement for commodore Wyley.

Wendell Wyley first appeared in San Francisco in 1906 as a result of an experiment in a peculiar branch of physics from a world which coexists with our own. Emigrating to the United States he then....

San Francisco Chronicle

11/27/14

Patagonia, Argentina- The Bromfkidoran forces, spearheaded by the so called "Cloudmaster" ships have successfully held all of the lands south of the Rio Colorado for ninety days. In Argentina and Chile, fear stalks the land and can be clearly seen on the faces of people in the city of Buenos Aires.

For the time being, the line is held by the Pan-American forces but has not been moved an inch in three months. To the south of that line, the Bromfkidorans build new cities and bases for their skyships. The native population is enslaved to perform the labor and at the same time required to swear allegiance to the gray king, Buerno Montolla.

It is rumored that over twenty-thousand Argentine citizens have died south of the frontier. Thousands of others have packed up and fled to the mountains.

Reporters have been told that strange and monstrous animals, for meat and as beasts of burden, have been imported, particularly south of the Rio Negro. The descriptions of some of these animals have been difficult to lend any credence to.

The Bromfkidoran government has informed representatives of the Pan-American powers that a Patagonian state has been established as a protectorate of the Bromfkidoran Republic.

Argentine President Victorino de la Plaza reacted to that declaration by reaffirming that the war will not end until the Bromfkidorans are removed from all American lands, Montolla is tried as a criminal and monetary reparations are made.

The Chilean government, lacking a standing army or navy to enforce its rights, has said nothing but the Governments of Colombia and Brazil as well as those in North America have reminded the Bromfkidorans of the long standing policy against foreign intervention in the Americas. Thus far, there has been no response from Bromfkidor.

From an interview with

Wendell Wyley-1935

"I knew at that moment that I was about to die."

Chapter Nine

The World Beneath the Land

I knew at that moment that I was about to die. My hair and clothing were on fire as I plunged toward the frigid waters of the Molad. In one hand I gripped the piece of the door frame I was holding onto at the time of the explosion, in the other the long Bromfkidoran sword. I curled into a ball to lessen the blow as I hit the river.

Of the impact itself, I have no memory of whatsoever.

I awoke, amazed to be alive on the river bank. I saw the smoke rising from the wreck of the Bromfkidoran ship a mile or so up river from me. The sword and piece of door frame were still gripped in my fingers. I don't know exactly how much time had passed as I was still unused to telling the time from the sun's position on the horizon rather than its height.

It would have been quicker to inventory the parts of me that didn't hurt than those which did. I was cold, hungry and totally naked so obtaining food and clothing appeared to be my first order of business.

The creature that I brought down in the pursuit of these needs was, no doubt, someone's "cow" which allowed me to approach it entirely unchallenged and slay it where it stood. The creature somewhat resembled a rhinoceros save that it was equipped with a shield protecting its neck and a heavy tail.

Its skin was so thick that it had to be split before it would make sufficiently flexible clothing. The meat tasted like a combination of turkey and beef.

After some time I was able to fashion for my self a crude kilt and vest from the untanned hide of the beast. Even at a half thickness, I suspected that these garments might well have shed bullets as a duck's feathers shed water. I had been able to salvage my various buttons, buckles and other fireproof parts of my burned clothing and pressed them into service on my new garments where I could giving them a curious look combining the primitive and the modern.

Having met my most pressing needs, I started to make my way down river for Nomchit Sharomna. I assumed that none of my people knew that I was still alive and that Huascar Garza was now in command

of the mission. No doubt the president would find this intolerable and would want to place an American in the position and stall the mission as a result. I had to get back.

Over the next few days I became quite a skilled hunter with the outsized sword. In short order I had constructed a portable tent, some primitive tools and a small wheeled cart which I could load with my few rude belongings and pull behind me as I made my way slowly back north.

A while, I couldn't tell if it was a week or three weeks¹,_into my trek, I spotted a snare, a primitive trap in the woods. It had been made with some skill, but little evidence of metal or other industrial products. This appeared to be the work of hands which were wholly untainted by modern society. This was the work of a savage. A mared² was held tightly in the coils of the snare, a free meal. A swift stroke from my sword dispatched the creature and I bent down to untangle its body.

When I rose, I found myself looking into a very strange pair of eyes. I thought at first that I was facing a gigantic bird. I quickly gained my bearings and the realization dawned that it was a man who stood before me. He wore a cloak of brightly colored avisaur feathers as his sole garment. His skin was a slate gray color which he had streaked with red and black paint as well as adorned with tattoos. His hair was done into multiple braids with feathers worked in. what caught my attention the most was the long spear that he brandished in my direction.

"K'dall m'taak, uutah!" The words he spoke were not Bromfkidoran, although the meaning was clear enough. He was accusing me, I admit correctly, of being a thief.

I held up my empty hands, "I'm sorry," I said in Bromfkidoran, "I was hungry." I held out the dead mared but he didn't take it. I laid it at his feet.

He pointed toward me and said in the same language, "You, white. Like...dead."

"Flattery will get you nowhere." I said in English under my breath.

He seemed to speak Bromfkidoran about as well as I did which was not well at all. I pointed to myself and said, "I'm not your enemy, I'll leave if you want."

"You not leave!" He said emphatically "You come!"

"Now wait just a..."

"You not leave!" As if to underline his words, four more men similar to himself appeared from the woods. All had the same slate gray skin a color quite distinct from the warmer gray of the other Bromfkidorans. They were also quite a bit smaller than the others being a few inches shorter than myself.

I addressed my captor asking, "What is your name?" Seeing as that the president had given me broad discretionary powers, I decided that something more than name, rank and serial number might be called for.

"You call me *Boyay*. Not my name, means 'hunter'. Name only spoken by my people, not you." This, I suppose, was in keeping with the superstitions of many savage races. It is a common belief among many tribes of men throughout the world that knowledge of a name confers magical power over the owner.

"I will tell you my name, it is Wyley. I mean you no harm and I have returned your maredij, why not let me go?"

"You come, Wai-lee, you are new kind of man and our shaman must see you before we know that you mean us no harm."

Thus it came to pass that I fell into the hands of savages.

The single hut had been right under my nose a few feet into the forest but entirely made in the same colors as the surroundings and of the same materials. The small structure was made from woven leaves and sticks. The tiny hut seemed too small to hold all five men at once.

The primitives guided me the hut and we passed through a skin flap which covered the door. Upon entering the tiny shelter, I found myself disoriented. The hut was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside. A torch lit hallway led away into an foggy distance and I realized that the hut was merely a doorway leading underground. I was prodded forward by one of the spears and started walking downward.

After a short time we came to a broad area which was full of people of all ages. a fire burned at the center and the smoke from it disappeared into a hole in the ceiling. Naked children ran to and fro, women beat fiber and ground grain on flat rocks and men hung meat to smoke and stretched hides on racks. It was a scene that might be seen in the darkest Amazon jungle transplanted to a deep cave. I could see that other corridors led off from this area. I wondered how extensive this underground village was.

Boyay spoke. "You will meet the shaman now."

The man who appeared from the shadows did not in the least conform to my expectations of a primitive medicine man's appearance. He was a well dressed, bespectacled Bromfkidoran of middle years with a studious air.

"You are the shaman?!"

The man waved his hand to dismiss the hunters who had brought me to him. "So these good folk have named me... you speak Bromfkidoran rather poorly, what is your native tongue?"

"English."

"Very good," he said in English, "my name is Harro Dzherod, I'm a military engineer. I built much of what you see here."

"How did you come to speak my language?" I asked.

"I served on several exploration teams over the last six years in Patagonia. I set up what we call 'invisible cities' in the region south of the Santa Cruz river."

"Invisible cities?" The man seemed to have no difficulty with explaining things to me, I figured that I might as well keep asking questions.

"Like this one. Underground."

I felt a void in the pit of my stomach. Dzherod continued, "We were part of a presence which has been more or less constant since 1905. We made contact with people in small villages and on farms secretly building a base of native support. We introduced Bromfkidoran animals and plants. We increased the wealth of the people of the region."

"How many?" I asked, "How many Bromfkidorans were in Patagonia before the invasion?"

"Perhaps ten thousand. It was felt that the entire continent could be conquered from Patagonia. That land was to be the center from which the Great Principal would be enacted. We were all schooled in Spanish, English, Portuguese and French so that we would be able to be understood anywhere in the Americas."

"If you were so well trained as a conqueror and were part of a project that had formed such a strong presence in South America, why are you here now?"

"As I came to know people and as I came to understand the history of the outer lands, I began to realize that most of the world's people would never accept Bromfkidoran rule and further would kill hundreds of thousands to prevent it."

"You don't support your nation's cause?"

"No longer, I support Bromfkidor and I know it would be destroyed in a war against the world. I want my nation to be here in the future as Bromfkidor, not partitioned and occupied by foreigners. I came home and I came here to use my skills to defend my country against itself."

For the first time I felt guilty about my feelings against the Californian grays. I was coming to realize that this conflict was of a broader, less simple nature.

Dzherod interrupted my musings to ask, "And who, sir, might you be?"

"I'm sorry. I'm commodore Wendell Wyley of the Aeroforce of the United States of America. I'm afraid that I am precisely one of the foreign interlopers you feared. Our governments have no desire to take over your country, we merely wish to keep your people from taking over ours."

His reply revealed him to be a thoughtful man who was absolutely undeluded by his own government's propaganda. "Surely," he said, "you don't believe that that's an actual possibility, do you? Some lands may be captured or even kept, but no single political line can sway the minds of every man on the planet. Bromfkidor must lose this conflict, it is a supreme inevitability. My goal is to favor the forces which will preserve the nation. You and I have the same mission. We are allies."

"Mister Dzherod, if we are allies, can you assist me in returning to Nom...." I quickly changed my mind about revealing the location of my base, "my headquarters?"

"I know that your people are at Nomchit Sharomna, and I can help you get back there."

So much for keeping a secret. I had no choice but to trust this man as he seemed to already know my

every move.

"Fine, Partner Dzherod, help me get home."

1 I never got very good at estimating time in Bromfkidor and my watch had been destroyed when I was thrown from the ship.

2 Maredij are game animals about the size and disposition of wild boars. They have faces rather like those of turtles and are covered with short brown feathers.

Chapter Ten

The Subterranean Empire

The underground village was expansive, containing more than just the simple tribe of forest hunters. Farther inward was a compound which housed a number of offices and barracks for several dozens of Bromfkidoran personnel.

Dzherod led me to an even lower level. Here there were none of the forest people, only gray men dressed in drab pinkish coveralls running here and there. They were all attending to the obscure needs of a metal behemoth squatting on a pair of rails which disappeared into the darkness of an enormous tunnel.

It was without a doubt the largest rail engine that any human had ever seen. The gigantic machine hummed and crackled with thousands of volts of electricity generated by a bank of five dynamos each one itself as big a locomotive.

"My god, Dzherod! what is it for?" I had to shout my question over the roar of the huge engine.

"The commerce of the entire nation takes place among the clouds. I needed a method of moving large numbers of people from place to place unseen. This tunnel extends from Shion to the south of us all the way into the interior of High Darmal beneath the city of Tippilina."

I was thunderstruck. "How was all this work performed undetected? The cost must have been astronomical! Where did the money come from?"

"I appropriated it from the government war chest over a period of many years. The new Cloud Master ships only cost about half of what the king and parliament think they do. Needless to say, I am but one of

many involved in this project."

I asked, "Will your people use this to move troops into Tippilina to stage a coup?"

"That was the original intent, and we might yet use it that way."

That answer was interesting in its vagueness, but I chose to save further questions on that subject for a later time.

It turned out that there was a maintenance station about fifteen miles up river from Nomchit Sharomna. The next day they would be sending the engine up the line to supply it and return with some people. Dzherod agreed to bring me with them and make contact with my people.

Before the age of the skyship, the Bromfkidorans had not developed rail travel to any great extent. Versions of the locomotive had been used in the mining industry and for commuter transport in the cities. Right around the time when rails would have spread across the land, the fabric of Bromfkidoran civilization unraveled into almost total anarchy. Society sorted itself out again when the invention of the skyship created the conditions which led to the Formation War. A military upstart named Dzhidro Bogadnij utilized a then little known technology to create a new nation from the ruins of society.

To make a long story short, he united the entire Antarctic world and became the first king of Bromfkidor. After that sky commerce became so well established that railroads never had a chance.

Except in this place. Except at this time.

I was having a hard time believing that something as massive and noisy as a rail engine could be used as a subtle tool by a secret underground movement. Bromfkidor was an even stranger land than I had previously imagined.

As I spoke with Dzherod I took a step backward and bumped into something that had not been there before. I looked up and saw what looked at first like a large draft animal in some sort of armor of metal and wood.

"Dzherod, what is this thing?" I asked.

"It is a self directing mechanism, we use them for workers. They did most of the work creating these tunnels."

He used a long Bromfkidoran word meaning self directing mechanical helper to describe the thing, in the future I will use the closest English equivalent I can think of, "autonobile", or perhaps shorten it to "auton". Since that time I have heard such a device characterized by the Czech word signifying hard labor, but "auton" seems less arcane.

The machine was about the size of a horse, its limbs moved it with natural grace powered by multiple hydraulic pistons of a dozen different sizes. It was built to be able to shift its posture upright like a human. When it did so the hind legs shortened so that it would stand about nine feet tall.

Dzherod informed me that although the body of the creature was a mechanistic wonder, it was the

brain which was the true triumph of Bromfkidoran ingenuity. A special breed of fungus had been trained to grow in a nutritive gel which enabled each cell of the plant to either conduct or block an electric current. Further they can change that quality depending on the charge they receive. This network of mycological on/off switches is complex enough to allow the mechanical creature to think, act and speak without prompting.

And speak it did at that very moment. Its voice was surprisingly non-mechanical sounding but still could never be mistaken for that of a human. It sounded like it spoke from far away yet its volume was undiminished.

"Partner Dzherod, may I speak?"

"What is it Twenty-three?" said Dzherod.

"The briodkoj lines have been repaired and the final stretch of track has been tested. May I shut down my crew for the shift?"

"Well done Twenty-three. Shut down your crew."

If only Dzherod had known how much I had been through to cut those lines! He turned to me.

"Twenty-three will carry you to the detention area."

"Detention Area..." I started.

"I'm afraid that I must still treat you as a prisoner for the time being. I am not in a position to take chances. Not with any outlander, I hope you will understand."

The mechanism was equipped with three seats on its back and prompted me to mount one as it lowered itself almost to floor level.

Dzherod bid me good evening as the machine bore me away on all fours down a long corridor.

The corridor was well lit and occupied mostly by a wide variety of autons ranging in size from spider like forms about the size of a house cat to a few that approached the size of an elephant.

Frequently, my mount would stop and "converse" with one or another of its fellows in a peculiar "machine language" which was made up of ordinary syllables interspersed with sounds like pops, rattles and electric discharges. I can only render it poorly on paper.

A small auton signaled my mount with a loud "(Fizzz)-Pop!"

"K'pop naaz (zzzt) onip k'zaaz" replied my vehicle.

"D'(sizz) Maaa T'k'pop?" inquired the smaller device.

"K'(saaaz) na L'top." said mine.

The smaller machine leapt catlike to the seat beside mine. Apparently it had been asking for a ride.

The tiny auton was built with the mechanistic beauty of a fine Swiss watch. It had ten jointed legs and four delicate arms which ended with a bunch of needle fine fingers that it was able to move with smooth precision. This it demonstrated by setting to work making a minor repair on a small appurtenance of our host. I watched in fascination.

One of the machine's four camera eyes turned toward me.

"Naav schnazz k'pop" intoned the hitch-hiker solemnly. It pointed an arachnoid finger at my scorched and broken pocket watch which I had been using as a somewhat outsized button on my rude skin garment. Having nothing to lose, I handed over the ruined timepiece. With supernatural speed the bug-like device had the works of the pocket watch laid out in a neat row on the larger machine's back. It ground one piece here and hammered at another piece there with tiny precision tools which extruded themselves from hidden cavities within the tiny metal repairman's limbs. A little more than a minute later the device handed back my watch which was now ticking at a regular rate.

"Thank you." I said evenly, for, after all, what was left to surprise me here?

"K'pop dena naav." said the machine which then folded itself into a neat compact oblong and apparently went to "sleep".

These intelligent machines, while amazing, didn't challenge my view of reality. What I saw next did. Although they spoke, the devices I had seen so far resembled animal automatons. What I beheld now resembled a man. This andromorphic mechanism was directing various autons to their storage areas within a large cavern. when our turn came to approach I was able to examine it in greater detail. the being's torso was configured in a series of segments like the tail of a lobster which allowed it to bend and stretch in all the same ways as a human being. Its head was a box like structure which bristled with lenses, horns and antennae the purpose of some were obviously related to sight, hearing and speech, but that of others was entirely obscure. The arms and legs were complex collections of rods, cables, tubes and pistons which moved smoothly as the thing pointed, waved and gestured with graceful signals.

It signaled my mount to halt and spoke to it in very human sounding Bromfkidoran. "Identify?" It said officiously.

"Operations technician-carrier/ foreman number twenty-three. My cargo is line engineer/ repair technician forty-six and a prisoner authorized by Partner Dzherod."

"Please identify the prisoner."

"Commodore Wendell Wyley of the Aeroforce of the United States of America separatist stoma, alliance unconfirmed. Partner Dzherod informs that he should be housed comfortably."

The humanoid machine turned his spiky head toward me and spoke in slightly accented English. "Partner Wyley, I am director-dispatcher/ executive three, I will guide you to your quarters. Leaving those quarters without permission from partner Dzherod or myself will result in your being restricted to harsher conditions. If you cause too much trouble you will be killed. I trust you will do all in your power to avoid that possibility. I will assign line engineer/ repair technician forty-six to your service to adapt your quarters

for your comfort. Partner Dzherod will call on you in a few hours. Do you understand all of this?"

"Yes, I understand, dispatcher, executive...."

"Director-dispatcher/ executive three." said the machine in a petulant tone.

"May I call you 'Mister Three'?" I asked.

"I will respond to that name if you desire." Its tone was utterly neutral. "Please follow me." We walked down a narrow side corridor followed by the small, spider-like repair technician.

The apartment that Mister Three settled me in was well appointed and comfortable. The spider auton immediately set to work making little modifications to the place. It first shortened the legs on the bed and chairs to fit me more comfortably. It replaced the Bromfkidoran numbers on the fartalk buttons with Arabic numerals and It made adaptations to all the bathroom fixtures. none of this was done at my behest and the artificial creature made no attempts at communication. I learned much later that the autons were able to transfer large amounts of information between themselves in mere seconds. Evidently the technician had been "briefed" by Mister Three as to the sort of needs I might have.

It now behooved me to "cool my heels" as it were until Dzherod came to call.

Chapter Eleven

War Stories

Wireless message from the President of the

United States of America

I received with great sadness the news of commodore Wyley having been killed in action. His heroism shall be remembered forever and he shall receive the appropriate honors posthumously.

It is my duty at this time to see that the mission of our combined nations goes on. The importance of our cause in the Antarctic is even greater now than before. My first instinct is to appoint the highest ranking American to continue to lead the mission, but that man has informed me that he believes that in this situation the true chain of command should be followed. You men are on your own behind the enemy's lines and have had to live within your own chain of command. Therefore, I will not object to the appointment of Captain Huascar Garza to mission commander. This mission is still under the sponsorship of the United States government and I expect that the Colombian government will understand that they must still be responsive to the leadership of the United States. I also recognize that the resident expert with the mission is the Baron of Monterey who's judgment should still be regarded as something more than mere suggestions.

May God bless and guide you all,

Woodrow Wilson, President, United States of America

From the journal of Woodrow Hammond

Garza wears the burden of command with good grace in spite of the fact that he himself feels he is unprepared for the role. His small stature does not effect his great ability as an officer.

The president of the United States faces a huge amount of pressure at home over American troops under the command of foreigners and over myself, a foreign colored man, having the final word on many things.

The Bromfkidorans here are nervous. They have much to lose if things here don't go right. The politics outside their land don't mean much to them, but the politics within are a direct threat to their well being now that they have taken the step of sheltering outsiders. They stand to pay the ultimate penalty for treason if they are identified with our cause. This is why we cannot linger much longer in the pleasant surroundings of Nomchit Sharomna.

I have advised captain Garza that we should leave before too many days pass. I hope to return here in peacetime with my dear Ola to a united and happy family. Ferthijan is a strong young man with a wonderful future before him if his nation can survive the trial ahead. I would hope that one day he may fulfill his heritage of leadership.

From a report by captain Alberto Santos-Dumont

After due consultation with the Mission Commander and the Baron of Monterey, I have decided to remove from this location and head south into the region which we have severed from communication with the capital. It is our hope that we might be able to secure control of at least a small area where we can bring in more ships and materiel and begin to pursue this campaign in earnest. It is clear to me that this nation must be occupied and partitioned if we are to have peace. I am trying to convince the Baron and captain Garza that we should take the flight to Prandal where the heart of the Bromfkidoran skyship industry is located. We can destroy the country's major manufacturing facility, we greatly even the odds. It is my firm belief that this nation must be torn down in order to rebuild it with a new government which will take a participatory role in the world.

A reading from the Zorma

section 5, book 1

The Statements of Harro

16,42

"Spoken in the name of the one true God, the eternal, the invisible, creator of the world and protector of truth."

"The God eternal and invisible, that he may protect us, that he may inspire us, that he may guide us to his side, has instilled in us, his creatures, his children, both the will toward loyalty and the potential for doubt. We must take good care how we use these qualities within us lest we find ourselves straying from the way set by God. God calls us to loyalty to He above all others but he also calls upon us to honor our father and our mother. He calls upon us to follow our king so long as he follows the way of God. Beware of those among you who will urge you to stray from what is known to be truth. Beware of those who will try to shake your faith and those who will say, 'Come with me along the less rocky road'. Turn your back upon them! Give them not your ear! If one seeks to turn you from the true path, then he speaks with the tongue of the deceiver! God eternal and invisible, that he may protect us, that he may inspire us, that he may guide us to his side, says "Only one road leads to my house! It is the road of honor and it is the road of obedience! Remember this and remember to honor your True King!"

From the San Francisco Herald

January 12th 1915

As the new year has found all of the Americas deeply embroiled in the conflict in Patagonia, Word from the United States military leadership concerning their foray into Bromfkidor is slim. The mission which is headed by American Commodore Wendell Wyley, a person well known to Californians as the man who mysteriously appeared in a peculiar flying machine in 1906 with CSC chairman Lord Woodrow Hammond.

Although the mission is supported by some twelve American nations, it is supposedly under United States military command.

The experimental Brazilian skyship "*Pinzon*", captained by Alberto Santos-Dumont, has been heard from only sporadically and the Brazilian government is becoming less patient with the United States. His Majesty Emperor William has formally asked United States President Woodrow Wilson to provide more information on the state of the mission.

In the meanwhile, the war goes on in South America with the Bromfkidorans advancing farther north each day using their great air power and enormous beasts of burden to sweep through large areas with little opposition. The Bromfkidoran government has made no provision for general surrender, their military commanders accepting the surrender of individuals only but refusing to speak to government officials of any rank. They vehemently refuse to recognize the legitimacy of any government but their own.

From an address before the combined parliament

by his Majesty Buerno Montolla,

King of the Republic.

Shodan 18th 1596

(January 22nd _1915)

"Sadly, there are a growing number of dissidents and traitors among us. They are swayed by lies and exotic tales from the Beyonders. To the law abiding citizens of this land I offer the words of Harro when he said 'honor your true king!' Do not be swayed by the sweet promises of those would rip asunder the fabric of our world!"

Commander's Log

aboard D.B. Pinzon

We have now penetrated deep into the stoma of Keld. With only the *Pinzon* and the two satellite ships, we cannot control much area at a time. Also, the Bromfkidoran military is now coming into the region in force. We must, more likely sooner than later, escape over the mountains to the west into the frigid Outer Waste. Santos-Dumont wants to stand and fight and I register his opinion here at his request, but in my judgment we have too few resources at this time to make a credible stand.

We have made some friends among the populace which, it must be remembered, could pay the ultimate penalty for being our friends. This dedication among some of the natives gives me hope that this mission might yet accomplish much.

-Huascar Garza, acting mission commander, January 22nd

From a letter by Yedner D'Mondria, Guide from the

community of Altrand, Mekhrandur to his father.

You father, as a priest of the way of Zormia, should know that the King spoke a true blasphemy in his address of last night.

The 'True King' referred to in *Statements* 16,42 is God and not any Earthly king. I only hope that he made this error out of ignorance and not out of some delusion of personal divinity. I am deeply worried at the course of events. The Guidance committee has been removed more and more from the path of information concerning military operations while the King and Senate become more and more secretive. I

ask for your prayers that the soul of our world may survive these times and this king.

From "Rising to the Challenge"

by Senator Wendell Wyley

1942, Haddon Press

"Ultimately, I knew that standing up against Roosevelt and the monolithic political machine he commanded caused me far more anxiety than anything I faced at even my worst moments in Bromfkidor. There, my battle was elemental. I was called upon to defend my life and my nation's interests with weapons and tactics.

In the battle with the President, I had to win the minds of my own countrymen from the overbearing economic programs of big government. That I was unable to convince a majority of the voters of this is evidence only of the power of the Democratic party to deceive the public as to what constitutes 'it's own good'."

Cover story from "The Carrier"

a Tippilina daily news sheet

Shodan 24th 1596

TRAITOR ARRESTED AT

PALACE OF GUIDES

On orders from the King's Table, a member of the Guidance committee was taken into state custody early yesterday. Yedner D'Mondria of Altrand, Mekhrandur, who has served in the guidance committee for sixteen years, was taken for questioning concerning the content of a letter written to his father, a local priest in his home community. The letter accused the King of blasphemy and indicated that D'Mondria was in opposition to national wartime polices. Statement of such opposition is a crime in wartime.

After several hours of questioning, Guide D'Mondria was charged with treason. He will be tried before the Grand Court within a week.

*From the diary of Baroness Ola Sharomna do Hammond do Pojona jasz Stomo Nomchitka do
Bromfkidoro,
Princess of Pojona, wife of Woodrow Hammond*

In the months since the Baron has departed, my homeland has chosen to stand against the world in the name of the "Great Principal".

Although the strength of Bromfkidor is great, they cannot and must not win this conflict. It is not only because I have been a political dissident in my homeland that I say this, but because I have seen living in this larger outer world that political diversity feeds the human soul. In California, unlike our neighbors in the United States and Mexico as well as my native land, women take part in the political life of the nation. We have a vote and we can hold office. My husband has had the ear of the Emperor and since he has embarked on this mission I have been honored with several audiences, mostly to lend insight about Bromfkidor.

The Emperor has been little by little, removed from the intricacies of governmental management to more ceremonial roles but his power to inspire and serve as a symbol to his people is undiminished. He is a good, but uncomplicated man, the only man in the Californian government who is precisely the man he represents himself to be. When I compare him to Montolla, I find them to be exact opposites. Montolla is the center of power in his country and is full of hidden agendas and thirsty for even greater power. William is a simple and personable man who, while he takes his position seriously, knows that fate alone placed him where he is and is content with what he has.

From "The Carrier" Shodan 34th 1596

D'Mondria Executed

Late day yesterday, Guide Yedner D'Mondria was put to death on orders from King Buerno Montolla. There had been a rumor that the King was going to commute his sentence to life imprisonment, but he issued a statement just prior to the sentence being carried out that the punishment was appropriate.

A lone musketeer carried out the sentence with two shots upon direct orders from the King. The criminal was pronounced dead and his body was cast from Odoir bridge into the waters of the Darwa.

D'Mondria is survived by his parents, two sisters, a wife and two children. His seat on the Guidance Committee will go unfilled for the remainder of his term of office.

From the notebooks of Wendell Wyley

Its easy to see that the mechanical creatures which surround me represent what could be a formidable weapon. The grays have even made them self reproducing and to some degree self designing. If I was in charge of the program of creating and maintaining these things, I would be disturbed that the language they use among themselves is entirely unintelligible to humans.

Dzherod informs me that the Autons have existed for only about seven years and have arrived at their current state of development mostly through their own design. Evidently the first autons were rather primitive affairs which were either rooted to one spot or supported on wheels. They were clumsy and capable of only rough heavy work, but the quality of their brains outweighed the quality of their bodies and they started making improvements on themselves. The few original types diversified into a dozen then a hundred within the first two years. A designer would only need to tell the autons of a particular type needed and they would produce that type. Some among the original designers voiced fears that they were becoming too independent, but there had never been any sign of a wish for autonomy on their part. These artificial creatures seemed content to serve their creators without complaint.

The language they used seems to have developed from the electric commands that were used to control the very earliest types. Manifesting these commands as sound made it easy to command several of the mechanisms at once. One would be used to convey a message to a fellow worker and the use of language between them evident. They convey a stream of intelligent sound to one another far faster than humans do so their language sounds like the hisses and pops of electric discharges. I suppose that the single problem which leads me to the most anxiety about these creatures is that they have such a different type of intelligence from men. Although they are mentally quicker than humans, they do not appear to be clever in the conventional sense. They have no quality that we could identify as wit nor do they appear to have poetry in their souls. It is the contention of Dzherod that they have no souls at all and should be treated as one would treat any other piece of equipment. Perhaps he has been too close to their genesis to see that these are something more than hydraulic presses or rail engines.

Chapter twelve

Northward

Having spent the last few days sharpening my language skills in conversation with Dzherod, I was now much more confident in my usage of the common tongue of this region. I now sat in the cabin of the great rail engine as the walls of the tunnel shot past. The dark sides of the passage were shored up with huge timbers. I caught little glimpses of autons making small repairs here and there as we sped by. I was unsure how long I had been separated from the others but I suspected that it might be several weeks at this point.*

It would take seven hours to reach Nomchit Sharomna and I would spend that entire trip worrying about what I was going to find there and what had become of my command.

Dzherod had assured me that his underground rail network and army of autons would be a strong ally to our cause in Bromfkidor. Most of the people of the lowlands outside of the high mountain cities had little interest in expanding the Bromfkidoran hegemony. It was his feeling that the incursion into South America didn't have much support outside the senate and military establishment. Very little, in fact was made public concerning the war and what facts were presented in the papers and public announcements were colored strongly by the view that Patagonia was a province in revolt being brought under control, not a foreign land being invaded. Many progressive intellectuals and salt of the Earth farmers and workers had seen through this but had not actively spoken out. Using wartime as an excuse, the King and Senate had dealt harshly with any criticism. Dzherod informed me that even some legislators had fallen victim to the war machine engendered by the King's Table.

He also told me that part of his job as a government engineer was to lay a cable beneath the waters of the Drake Passage. Opening fartalk lines to South America would do much to harden Bromfkidor's hold on Patagonia. Thus far he had been, able to tell the Senate that the technical difficulties were, at least at the moment, overwhelming. In fact he had secretly had a rail tunnel constructed linking the systems of "Invisible Cities" on both continents.

It was my strong suspicion that Dzherod saw ultimate power at the end of his plans. He had succeeded in controlling whole areas of technology which were unknown to the King and most ordinary citizens. In my society such a man might be referred to as a "mad scientist". If such a person were to stand in opposition to his civil and military government he might even be thought of as a "criminal mastermind". I knew that I would have to leaven my reliance on Harro Dzherod with at least a pinch of skepticism. Men who build underground empires with stolen government funds, using the help of painted savages and intelligent machines perhaps deserve a handful, so I felt I was being generous.

The scene of our departure from the Invisible City had been as if from a drunkard's fantasy. Teams of painted and feathered forest men mounted on huge dray-autons had spent the day loading supplies onto the train while its immense electric engine was charged by its team of five dynamos. The sharp smell of ozone was everywhere and the savages shouted to one another in their staccato native tongue. Having been mostly shut away for some time, I would have been unused to even the normal hustle and bustle of readying a large undertaking and the peculiar nature of this one only added to disorientation. As I had so many times in my life now, I asked myself, "What has lead me to this place?".

But now I had put these musings behind me as I tried to plan for the unknown which lay ahead. I was so concerned as to the state that I would find my command in that my anxiety was visible to Dzherod as he stood beside me in the front engine.

"You look worried, partner Wyley." He stated blandly.

"I have never gotten used to being a stranger in a strange land although I have had a lifetime's experience being one."

"How long have you been in Bromfkidor?"

"Its not Bromfkidor to which I refer. I am not of this world partner Dzherod." Dzherod looked at me with the curiosity reserved for lunatics and dreamers. "I'm not lying Dzherod, eight years ago I had been flying an aeroplane around San Francisco bay looking for survivors of a major earthquake..."

"Aeroplane?"

"Its a heavier-than-aircraft, a frame with wings and a powered air screw without any buoyant gas."

"Such a device can work?" I could see the wheels of speculation turning behind his eyes.

I pushed ahead with my story. "A huge skyship appeared in the sky over the city. I had never seen such a thing. To me, it was a visitor from a fantasy, vehicles of this type simply did not exist.

"As I flew closer I became disoriented, the world.... shifted, somehow. I became unsteady and was forced to land my aeroplane on the deck of the great ship. There, I was greeted by a man, the like of which I had never seen, a member of your race, a Bromfkidoran. He was a skyman in the service of the Californian Empire which was a political entity I had never heard of. Over the side of the ship I saw a totally unfamiliar city which I was told was indeed San Francisco. I had become lost as no man had become lost before. As the result of a peculiar scientific device aboard the skyship, I had been drawn to a new world which was both infinitely distant from and right next door to my own."

"What was the nature of the 'scientific device'?"

"Even if I understood that, I wouldn't be able to tell you. It is a secret of the United States government. All I can say is that I have made a life for myself in this world and the technology which brought me here is used much more carefully today."

Perhaps I had said too much, particularly since the creator of parallel field technology was here in Bromfkidor. I was very happy after the fact to have failed to mention it.

Dzherod shook his head. "The wonders of the world are ever changing." It showed on his face that his greatest reverence was reserved for the power of science.

The tunnel, lit only by the eerie light from the electric arc head lamp, shot past with a somnambulistic effect. The forward cab of the engine was occupied by only Dzherod and I as well as the auton engineer who spoke not a word the entire trip. For all I knew, this one might well have been incapable of speech.

The rhythmic clattering of the engine was lulling my senses and Dzherod was being insistent on questioning me on industrial arts which were either secret or of which I was ignorant. I finally took the excuse of needing a nap to beg off from the conversation.

I was awakened by Dzherod some time later. He told me that we were at an invisible city a day's march

from Nomchit Sharomna. Here, there was a maintenance center for the rail engine. There were no forest men here and autons only at the track level. An employee of Dzherod's outfitted me with local style clothes and an ostrich-like mount to make the final leg of my journey with. I was given a map which had been translated into English clearly showing landmarks marked in red.

Dzherod saw me on my way, riding the first hour of my journey by my side. When we finally parted he left me with a warm handclasp and a calculating glance. I sensed that he didn't want to leave me on my own but was being driven by an internal agenda which forced him to do so in order to fulfill it.

Once again, I was on my own in the Bromfkidoran wilderness although much better equipped this time. Warm clothes, a gun, packaged food and transportation would have all seemed like impossible luxuries on my previous episode at large. I now wore the sword in a sheath on my back. Its grip sticking out over my shoulder, its point reaching somewhere behind my knee. I also had one of the curious large bore pistols used by the Bromfkidoran military and police forces. The bullet was ejected at a slower speed than the pistols I was used to using, but could do grave work at close range. The beast I rode was tractable, affectionate even, and seemed to be able to eat just about anything. He or she, I never figured out its sex, proved to be quite good company on my journey. Companionship that was much needed given the necessity of avoiding all humans. My clothing was warm and sturdy of a style that might be seen on a typical hunter of the Bromfkidoran lowlands. If I was seen from a distance, I would most likely be ignored.

The small engineer auton was folded into a neat package, apparently sleeping, in my back pack. Mister Three had trained it to understand commands in English although it still was incapable of speaking anything but the mechanical language of its fellows.

With my watch now repaired, I was able to tell the passage of time accurately. My waking and sleeping cycle seemed to push my rising time approximately an hour ahead for each twenty-four hours. Without the rising and setting of the sun, I seemed to have adopted a twenty-five hour day.

After thirty-six hours of riding with time out for sleep, The village around Nomchit Sharomna came into view. I saw no sign of the *Pinzon* or any of its crew. The small wireless transmission tower was gone. I had been left for dead and the mission had carried on without me.

*Although the engineer auton had repaired my watch, I had had no way to reset it with any accuracy.

Chapter 13

The Adventure over the Ice

A conference with Ferthijan do Sharomna confirmed my worst fears. I was indeed presumed dead and the *Pinzon* long gone. Government troops had briefly occupied Nomchit Sharomna, but due to the efficiency of Ferthijan's staff, no evidence had been found of the estate extending hospitality to "Beyonders".

As far as Ferthijan knew, the *Pinzon* had fled to the western ice, perhaps back to New Zealand. If this

was true, I was alone in a strange and hostile land.

I passed a few days at the estate but I knew that I had to find a way to make contact with my people. Ferthijan offered me the use of a small skyship which the village used for light freight.

The small vessel had most of its interior as cargo space which I loaded generously with food, blankets and other supplies. It was not built to take a great deal of punishment and its gas cells were somewhat undersized so it would be unable to reach high altitudes particularly over the frozen outer waste.

After spending some time aquatinting myself with the Bromfkidoran controls, I took my leave and set out toward the western horizon.

I had made the simplest of wireless receivers which could indicate the presence of a signal by the movement of a needle. With some luck, this device would allow me to find and follow the signal of the Pinzon.

Over the next few days I experienced growing discomfort as the jerry-rigged aircraft passed from temperate Bromfkidor into the harsh climate of the Outer Waste. As the cabin grew colder, I spent more and more time asleep wrapped in layers of blankets. I knew it would be only a matter of time before I should not wake again and the skyship would come to final rest upon the ancient ice to be buried by the ever accumulating snows.

The needle of the detector never moved once in ten days. My prospects for survival were more grim than ever. Had I enough fuel I would have made back for the inner lands, but after day six, I had reached the point of no return. My altitude had sunk to a scant five hundred feet and I had all but resigned my self to the inevitable. I finally ran out of fuel thus leaving myself little more than a floating speck over the frozen landscape, a slave to the whims of Aolus.

I later learned that I had been out there thirteen days when I sensed a jostling of the aircraft as I slept. In my half consciousness I presumed that it was the craft scraping the ice as it gently came to rest. My own impending death seemed hardly worth rousing myself for. Next I knew, a parka-clad man stood over me with some companions and muttered to them unintelligibly. He knelt and lifted me from the floor of the ship and said "He's still alive!" in English. The man's face was dark bronze with flashing white teeth, it was the face of Woodrow Hammond. I again sunk into unconsciousness.

When I awoke after some lengthy period of delirium I saw four persons at the foot of my bed. They were Hammond, Alprendauro, Santos-Dumont and Garza.

Taking their time, they filled me in on happenings of the events during my absence. Santos and Hammond, while impressed by my seeming resourcefulness, had been horrified when I took it upon myself to single-handedly attack the Bromfkidoran warship. They had also been impressed by its success even in the light of my having apparently paid the ultimate price for my actions. Of course, the Bromfkidoran government would not long remain unaware of the *Pinzon's* presence in the light of such events as the loss of a warship and a cutoff of communication to a large segment of the country. They had gone south to survey what they could and attempt to take control of the area. Word soon arrived that a fleet had moved into Nomchit Sharomna and would soon overtake them.

With regrets Garza, who had been assigned as new mission commander, made the decision to head for the Western Ice. For over two months they had hung about the icy plains and mountains making only short forays into the interior for supplies or to harass the enemy.

Having heard this, I related my own tale which was, as one might guess, one of fascination and wonder to my audience. Even Alprendauro had thought the savage races of Bromfkidor were long extinct. All were on the edge of disbelief regarding Harro Dzherod and his wondrous underground empire. I think Santos in particular thought that it might well be the product of my delirium. I myself might have thought so and almost did until I found my perfectly functioning watch in the pocket of the Bromfkidoran style jacket I had been wearing. I also found the dormant engineer auton in my pack but wanted to show it to the scientists before anyone else, so I kept its existence to myself for the time being.

After a few days recovery, Garza officially returned command of the mission to me. I was moved to believe that he was more than happy to do so. I learned later that, while his orders had been obeyed without question, it was well known that Santos disliked his assignment because he was a Colombian and the Americans had had similar feelings because he was an Indian. Garza could feel their prejudice and had considered turning over command to Hammond who explained that his problems with the Americans were nothing next to what he would be likely to experience. I believe that it had been a very sobering duty for the Colombian officer.

When I finally took the mission in hand it was perhaps only to end it. The *Pinzon* had roamed the outer waste now for two months but had accomplished little. I thought that the time had come to return to New Zealand to consult with officials and ponder our next move.

The War was on in earnest now with ground and air combat on the plains of Patagonia and our ship might be more effective elsewhere. Thus I gave the order to abandon this strange continent and we set off to the west and ultimately, the sea.

When we were one day from the edge of the Western Ice, we experienced a sudden massive interference with our wireless communications. We had had a clear signal to New Zealand but now it was becoming progressively more fragmented and supplanted by random buzzing from the telegraph.

Through a speaking tube came an excited voice, Skyman Miller on rear lookout. "Coming from behind, sir. I'm not sure what they are, but there are a lot of them!"

"What the Devil?!?" said Hammond.

"Lets go see." Said I.

Hammond, Santos and I, along with a few more officers headed for the rear observation bubble.

The trip along the skyship's spine took us five minutes. Along the way we heard a cry of "They're gaining!" as we approached the rear. Upon our bustling arrival, what we saw stunned us.

Captain Santos-Dumont looked bewildered. "Is that a flock of birds?"

"Aeroplanes." I said. "Once Dzherod knew that it was possible, he had to develop them."

"But they seem to have arms and legs." said the captain..

"Lord in Heaven," I whispered under my breath, "They're autons!"

Hammond looked truly surprised. "Then that wasn't some sort of delusion?"

"I'll leave that for you to decide, Lord Hammond." I said sardonically.

As they swooped and dodged about the ship, we were able to get a closer look at the mechanical creatures. They were almost human shaped with the wings sprouting from their backs. A propeller was attached to a post which emerged from near the base of the creatures spine. Sometimes they would stop and cling to the side of the ship and when they did their wings would fold like the carapace of some huge and hellish beetle.

Without warning, one was clinging to the rear observation bubble and in short order punched its way through the glass. It entered the ship and all present drew weapons. Before a shot could be fired, the auton spoke. "Wylie, Harro Dzherod needs your help!"

"This demonic thing knows you?" Cried Santos.

"Its creator does. I think we should hear it out."

"Wylie, Harro Dzherod needs your help." repeated the creature as several of his fellows followed it through the hole in the bubble. As a result of that hole the temperature in the observation cabin was rapidly falling.

"Why does Dzherod need me?" I asked.

"He Has sent a recording" said the auton. Before our astounded eyes a portion of the living mechanism's chest opened up to reveal a circular ground glass screen upon which appeared the face of Harro Dzherod in the form of a speaking motion picture. Speaking perfect English, the image of Dzherod addressed me.

"Partner Wylie, I want you to know that my revolt against the central government has begun. Today the rail engine transported several hundred automobiles to Tippilina. I predict that they shall control the city in a very short time. I will not be able to hold the city long enough for a popular revolt to establish itself. I call upon your Beyondor governments for help. If I can establish myself in a position of leadership, I can work with your governments to normalize relations. Will you help me?"

The message continued with instructions on how we might reply via the auton standing before us.

Hammond was the first to speak. "It is hard to believe the level of industry this man commands."

Santos spoke up. "Only the leadership of the combined American powers can endorse a new government."

"I agree," I said, "I am expected to require the surrender of the government of Bromfkidor on our terms. If it is the current government or its successor is not relevant to my mission."

I turned and spoke directly to the living mechanism. "I have to carry out a particular mission. That mission does not include aiding a technocratic takeover of the Bromfkidoran government. Partner Dzherod must be on his own until I can consult with my superiors."

The auton had restored its former semi-humanoid shape and stood listening to what I had to say although it was now apparent that the decision had been made for us all ready. Outside the ship was the rising sound of a hundred propellers like the buzz from a hive of wasps. The flock of autons had seized our ship and were now dragging it back toward the borders of the hidden republic.

Chapter 14

Captured

For several hours the infernal buzzing filled the ship. I had ordered the helmsman to hold us at station but the sheer number of the flying autons overwhelmed the power of the *Pinzon's* engines, thus we were being slowly dragged back into Bromfkidor.

The auton who had spoken with us could not be reasoned with. It explained that we were needed and that our destination was Tippilina. Further information would come from partner Dzherod, it said.

As we came closer to the edge of the Outer Waste, the autons were joined by increasing numbers of their fellows. We were in a very poor position. We could not remove the flying creatures without causing damage to our own ship and our fuel was now running low. I ordered the engines to be shut down.

I dictated a letter to the president explaining as well as I could our situation and sent out a scout ship loaded with as much fuel as it would hold and a single skyman at the helm to make for New Zealand.

He carried my letter and the tiny engineer auton as proof of the level of artifice we were up against.

The swarm of autons ignored the small ship as it separated from us and sprinted for the horizon. By wireless we wished him Godspeed.

Mister Tesla, accompanied by several members of the engineering staff came to the bridge of the ship to see the wonder of science which now stood there before the front windscreen.

He asked me, while regarding the creature, "It speaks?"

I responded tiredly, "It speaks, it flies, it's devilishly strong. Its companions now control this ship and drag us toward untold dangers."

"Might I converse with it?"

"All it has said for the last few hours has been that the Bromfkidoran scientist needs my help. I doubt you will get much out of it. Speak to it if you must, but divulge nothing sensitive, its master craves certain areas of knowledge which we must hold exclusive to ourselves."

Tesla, seeming almost shy, approached the creature. He studied it carefully, noting that it was built on a skeleton of light wood reinforced with steel rods. He also noted that every other material he could think of was somehow used in its construction. He saw parts which appeared to be made from oil cloth, ceramic, glass and hard rubber. Its eyes were huge lenses behind which he thought he could detect organic matter. He was in utter awe of the mind which had conceived such a mechanism. In his mind, that credit belonged to Dzherod, but the truth was that this device had been designed and built by other autons.

"I am Nikola Tesla." He said.

The machine spoke in a clear, but obviously non-human voice. "I am designated Flyer/Messenger-Courier 1."

"You are a remarkable machine Flyer/Messenger-Courier 1."

"You are also a remarkable machine Nikola Tesla." It replied. I would swear before God almighty that there was a touch of humor in the creature's voice.

"How old are you?" inquired Tesla.

"I was initiated twenty-four days ago. My brain is a scion of one which was engendered four years ago."

"So you have learned everything you know in the last four years?"

"My memory is supplemented by recorded information borrowed from many individual automobiles. You might say that I am a new soul with an old mind."

Tesla was not really surprised by that information, but it still was a great wonder to him. This creature had an entirely different type of mind from that of a human. Its English had improved greatly in the few hours it had been on the ship. It had not conversed at length with anyone so it must have picked it up just from hearing people around it.

The animated device and Tesla spoke for several minutes, then he returned to my station on the bridge. He said to me, "We should speak alone."

Having no control over the ship in any case, I could see little harm in leaving the bridge for a short spell. I called Garza to the front and then stepped out into the corridor with Tesla.

When we were in the corridor he spoke. "The autons are not slaves." he said.

"But Dzherod made them."

"He made them not as a man makes an industrial device but as a parent makes a child. They rule their own minds. Their bond to Dzherod is one of loyalty and perhaps that loyalty is that of a mere employee. It may only last as long as they benefit from association with Dzherod"

"Are you saying that we might be able to talk them out of this?"

"I'm saying it might be worth our while to try."

We returned to the bridge with the seed of a tactic if not a true plan. I would have to share this intelligence with my officers before I could really use this information.

Tesla had not told me of the other possible solution to our problem which he had in the back of his mind. I admit that I had forgotten completely about the supposed work that he and Molloy were involved in on this mission.

I was more concerned with the behavior of Santos who had headed for his cabin when the ship was taken over. The sound of his organ could now be heard distantly even on the bridge. He must have been playing at truly deafening volumes. While I understood his anxiety, the abandonment by the captain of his post was inexcusable. In spite of this, out of some compassion for what he had suffered, I decided to give him an hour to return to the bridge before I noted the incident in my log.

Santos returned shortly after the landscape began to change below us. Looking down I saw monstrous creatures stalk through the swampy lands near the edge of the Outer Waste. In the distance, I saw a small herd of montoradnajs, which I had learned was the name of the huge dinosaurian creatures I had encountered in Patagonia after the wreck of the *Andrews*. From a distance they were colorful and graceful in an elephantine sort of way. I remembered well trying to ride upon the back of one of these huge animals when it was in a state of terrified panic.

Santos now had control of himself and I turned the bridge over to him. My concerns over his apparent cowardice would have to wait for another time.

I walked over to the auton and spoke to it. "You said your name is 'Flyer-Courier'....."

"Flyer/Messenger-Courier 1", Interrupted the creature.

"Flyer/Messenger....yes. You are in control of our ship, so am I to assume that you can inform us as to when we arrive at wherever it is we are going?"

"We will stop over Odoir Bridge at Tippiilina in seven hours. The latest courier informs that the city is ours although the Palace of the King and the House of the King's Table is defended by a contingent of the army and the police force. The Palace of the Guides has been taken without loss of life as has been the city hall."

"Where is Harro Dzherod?"

"He is headquartered at the Palace of Guides. He will receive you there along with your senior officers when we arrive."

"And we are to be dragged backwards that entire distance?"

"No. Control will be returned to the bridge of your ship when Partner Dzherod's executive arrives."

Through a speaking tube came a voice from the observation bubble. "Commodore Wylie! A skyship is closing on us!"

The courier said, "That will be the executive now."

I spoke into the tube. "Do not panic. Mister Garza, please conduct the passenger to the bridge."

Santos shot out of the captain's seat. "You cannot actually be inviting the enemy on board!" he exclaimed.

"Please sit down Captain." I said. "They are more than capable of destroying this ship and killing everyone on board. I must do something to buy us some time."

Behind me I heard the voice of Huascar Garza. "Commodore Wylie, allow me to present 'Senor Tres'."

I whipped around and saw that I indeed faced my former jailer Director/Dispatcher-Executive 3, who had allowed me to address him as "Mister Three". Its mechanical eyes swiveled and focused on me. Although the face of wood, metal and glass was incapable of expression, I sensed a friendly geniality in its manner. "Commodore Wylie! It is a pleasure to renew our acquaintance!" It extended its hand in my direction.

"Would but the conditions were thus that I might share your pleasure!" I ignored the mechanical hand and the creature subsided.

"I am truly sorry that we found it necessary to use this method to bring you to the capital. I am to captain your ship only until you have spoken to Partner Dzherod. Upon the completion of that interview control of your vessel will be returned to the *appropriate persons*."

The creature was speaking English, so I'm not sure if those last words were intended to sound as cryptic as they came out.

After another hour we were flying over a verdant countryside under our own power. The flyer autons were stationed all over the upper deck and several more had come aboard. Santos had again retired to his cabin, this time by my orders. Hammond had taken on the look of a trapped animal, and I knew that he could be very unpredictable.

As if he had always been lord and master there, Mister Three took the captain's seat and spoke to the bridge crew.

"I am in temporary command of this ship. Failure to follow my orders could well result in the loss of this vessel."

The officers looked at me. If I were to give my tacit approval of this takeover, I could be guilty of treason. If I did not it could lead to the loss of every man on board. I waited a few seconds and finally spoke.

"I am depending on the discipline of this crew to see us through this ordeal safely. It seems to be in our best interests to cooperate at this time." I turned my attention to auton in the captain's chair. "Mister Three, you may stay on the bridge, but I am compelled to allow the destruction of the ship rather than endure a foreign takeover of command. You must relinquish control of the Pinzon to captain Santos-Dumont. Your

Flyers may escort us to Tippilina where we will go willingly. If we are accorded the status of prisoners, we will burn the ship."

Director/Dispatcher-Executive Three beckoned to the flyer and spoke a short sentence in the strange "machine language".

"K'zazz n'taq(buzz) ch'(hiss) ka M'kuzz T'Kadd."

When I had been held in custody in Dzherod's underground city, I learned a few "words" of the auton language. M'Kuzz T'Kadd was the title they gave Dzherod. Its meaning was something like Progenitor/Creator-Scientist/Leader, thus giving him a list-like name typical of the autons themselves. Having heard this name uttered in the orders to the flyer, I knew that it had been a personal message for Dzherod.

The flying creature marched from the bridge. The artificial being then turned his inhuman and unreadable face toward me. "I agree to your offer of cooperation. I assure you that Partner Dzherod means no harm to you or your crew. Indeed your cause may profit greatly. If he is able to secure control of the government, his first order of business will be to reach an *equitable agreement* with your governments."

Equitable agreement! I now had yet another nebulous piece of rhetoric to mull over. Dzherod was a slippery devil, this was true enough and as well, I fear, he made not one move which did not serve some greater, more personal agenda.

We were now in the mountainous region of northern Pojona. That we were close to Tippilina was shown by the increased skyship commerce we could see as well as the now constant stream of flyer autons relaying information between the ship and Dzherod's headquarters.

That he was using so cumbersome a method of transferring messages indicated to me that at least wireless communication remained outside his sphere of knowledge.

Hammond stood beside me on the bridge and pointed out to me various features and points of interest as we approached the city which occupied a divided mountain top. This mountain rose alone from a grassy plain where two great rivers ran at either side and on the downstream side became one. On the western side was the Molad. On the east, the Darwa.

The mountain itself was called by the name Darmal. and compared in size to any of the greater peaks of the Rocky Mountains of America. The upper reaches of the peaks had been sculpted into a multitude of terraces which held houses, factories, office buildings, formal gardens and parks and the thousand other things which went to make a great capital.

The mountainside was left wild below them save for a few cable car lines and electric cables. The main way in and out of this high metropolis was through the agency of the mad variety of skyships which filled the air. High masts and towers were the main architectural feature of this city's skyline. They served as docks for the aerial commerce of the land. I was at a loss for how customs inspection was carried out on cargo without a concentrated dock district of the city. Of course, I was compelled to remember that this city matured in the atmosphere of a supposed world government.

At one end of the grand avenue, which Hammond called "Darwa Odoir", was the palace of the King

which was the building in which the senate, or "King's Table", met. At the other was the palace of the Guides where elected representatives argued the fine points of legislation of the country. There was also a palace of the High Court, a Grand Library, a National University and numerous government buildings.

Hammond pointed out buildings which housed great markets and important cultural venues and the homes of leading citizens.

As the ship came closer to the bridge I saw something that even to my foreign eye, clearly did not belong. Near the base of the bridge on the side occupied by the palace of the Guides was a round pit in the living rock strewn all around with debris, the opening to a tunnel. Just outside of it was a huge drilling machine which had been pushed to the side. At the mouth of the fresh tunnel stood the gleaming metal rail engine which was the basis of Dzherod's underground empire. Like a multitude of ants, around it swarmed autons of every shape and size. We now saw that the palace of Guides was also surrounded by autons bearing arms, some of whom were ridden by naked howling forest men. At the center of the bridge the autons were engaged in battle with soldiers and police who were trying to prevent their advance on the King's palace.

A dreadnought class military skyship was down and burning among office buildings several blocks from the bridge and many smaller ones were making runs at the palace of the guides which was defended by great guns which had been placed upon its roof. There were bodies everywhere on the bridge itself as well as a good many wrecked autons. It was apparent that the battle had been fought for many hours.

Santos-Dumont ordered that the Pinzon be held at a high enough altitude to avoid most of the fire from the ground. The military forces apparently did not recognize the Brazilian markings on the ship and were assuming that we were fully a part of Dzherod's forces.

Mister Three informed me that only in the last hour or so had authorities become aware that it was Harro Dzherod who was behind this attack.

I asked Santos to hold the ship at station but to destroy the wireless if there was any chance of the ship being boarded. Having said that, Mister Three, Lord Hammond and I made our way to the drop pod.

Chapter 15

A War in the Streets

The drop pod had been designed to accommodate only two skymen. It now was host to two persons and one person sized living mechanism dangling from a cable in the open sky.

So it was with the strange combined sensation of hanging alone in the sky along with the almost coffin like confines of the drop pod.

It seemed that every move I made brought me into a freshly uncomfortable contact with some strange protuberance from the body of Mister Three. Hammond himself was half again the size of the average

skyman and seemed to take up more than his share of the limited space. His huge form offered as little comfort as that of the auton. The difference between Lord Hammond and a brick wall was, in this case, trivial.

Thankfully, the trip to the roof of the palace of Guides was a short one. We emerged upon the roof to the sound of distant gunfire. I looked up the avenue to see the line of battle about three quarters of a mile distant. What I had not noticed from the air that I now saw was that many of the large buildings of the city were being climbed by or had perched upon them huge autons, fully as large as the largest avisaur. These mechanical behemoths were like huge insects and bore upon their bodies many smaller autons as well as crews of the painted savages who captured building after building.

It looked to me like at least half of the city was under direct control of Dzherod's forces who were being met with only slight resistance everywhere save upon the grand avenue itself.

We were quickly ushered to an elevator which smoothly transported us into a huge room where pandemonium ruled the day.

The atmosphere in the broad hall was like the New York Stock Exchange combined with a rowdy crowd at a big city ball park. What it was nothing less than the Guidance committee, the lower house of parliament of the great nation of Bromfkidor. Even with a battle in the streets outside their door and their authority in question, these determined men continued to doggedly pursue their legislative work. How this work was carried out was unique, to say the least.

Men were nose to nose yelling into one another's faces, speaking in Bromfkidoran far too quickly for me to understand. Hammond told me that this was only slightly more animated than this chamber was in peacetime. Apparently there were fewer actual fist fights in these hallowed halls in normal times, but not so now. More than once did I see fisticuffs ensue in the short time it took to cross the room. On two separate occasions we were compelled to dodge ink pots which flew over our heads.

Upon a raised podium at one end of the room was a man I recognized as Harro Dzherod conferring with a large bug-like auton and two painted and feathered, but otherwise naked, forest men. Mister Three cleared the crowd ahead of us as he signaled for us to follow.

Before Dzherod could open his mouth, I was speaking. "You have committed an act of piracy in the free skies. What is your explanation?"

Dzherod smiled benignly. "Commodore Wylie! How nice to see you again. I apologize for detaining you, but perhaps you may understand my reasoning. The outside world needs to see what is happening here. I need you and your people in the Beyonder world to have first hand knowledge of my revolution."

At that point he caught sight of Lord Hammond. "Can it be?" He asked. "Can it be Woodrow Hammond? The 'Black Pirate'?"

Hammond scowled at the mention of the unflattering nickname as he looked Dzherod over. "I'm Hammond. So, you are going to be the new king?"

"King?!? No! I am an engineer. That's what is going on here, deciding the status of the government and incidentally, my own fate. These fellows", he said, indicating the battling Guidance committee, "were

arguing over my right to challenge the authority of the King. Then they were arguing over whether I represent a competing government or am merely a criminal. Shortly after that they argued over whether I hold liability for damages to private property should I prevail as opposed to if I should be taken into custody. They then took up the argument of what my exact crime was should that come to pass and whether or not I am still guilty of a crime should I win my cause. Following that, they dealt with the issue of the legal status of the autons as to their ability to own property. Something about the example I will set for the youth of this land came up. After that I lost track of the specific items of legislation. The entire business has given me a rather bad headache, I'm afraid." He shook his head and continued. "A new king is surely needed though. So long as Montolla sits at the head of that table, no Beyond land shall ever be viewed as an equal and the entire nation is in danger."

"So far as that goes, he's correct." Said Hammond, and I admit that I agreed, but I did not say so at that time.

"What then", I asked, "are you proposing?"

Dzherod said, "I have called for the arrest of the king and a few key senators. Thus far, no civil authority has chosen to heed my instructions. My second plan, therefore is now in motion."

"And that second plan would be....?" I asked.

"I must temporarily take total control of government. I must play the odious role of dictator."

I tried to imagine the state of this nation under Dzherod. Would his army be all autons, his police force painted forest dwellers? The idea seemed fantastic even in the light of other things which have emerged from this fantastic land.

"Surely you understand that we can only help in matters directly involved in the invasion of Patagonia." I said. "As far as I can tell, you have had as much to do with that as Montolla."

"I was a government engineer. I did create the means for bringing large loads into South America unobserved, but now I am seeking to right that wrong."

We were interrupted by a huge explosion just outside the building. I could see from where I stood the great entrance way pillars rocking back and forth. The arguing representatives scattered like frightened ants and in seconds the building was clear of all but for Dzherod, Hammond and I and a few autons.

"What hit us?" I asked. "Nothing looked that close."

Hammond and I ran to the entrance and looked up as we stood surrounded by rubble from the palace front.

Above the Palace of the King was an immense flying disc. A Cloudmaster. It was slowly following the path of the Darwa Odoir toward the Palace of Guides. Fresh smoke dribbled from the throat of a massive gun mounted on its underside and it was presumably only a matter of a few heart beats before the next shot would be fired.

"Damn it, Hammond! We're in it now!" I shouted. "We have to get back to the drop pod."

I called to Dzherod. "We must return to the *Pinzon*!"

Mister Three was all ready attempting to escort Dzherod from the soon to be wrecked building.

Hammond and I ran for the elevator and were on the roof less than fifteen seconds later. To our relief, the drop pod still hung at the level of the roof. Once we were inside I called into the telephone, "Ascend! Ascend!"

We had pulled about two hundred feet free of the building as the second shell found its mark. The roof folded inward amidst a rapidly expanding cloud of dust.

Hammond pointed to the open tunnel where I saw many hundreds of the flyer autons of the same kind which captured the *Pinzon*. They flew forth like a swarm of mosquitoes making for the Cloudmaster ship. We noted that they were armed with swords and pistols. I could but barely imagine the reaction of the crew of the huge ship when they found themselves faced by this horde of demons.

We looked up to see the *Pinzon* grow above us until we were safe aboard.

Safe was a very relative term because we knew that we were all but nose to nose with a ship which outgunned us three to one. There was little time. I felt that the circumstances were such to warrant as hasty a retreat as could be managed.

Hammond called for Molott and Tesla through a speaking tube. "Gentlemen, the Commodore has called for extraordinary speed. Can you help us?"

I had no idea what Hammond was talking about although I knew that he had been involved in advanced skyship experiments with these men.

An accented voice floated back up through the tube. "One minute." It had been Tesla.

From the bridge windscreen I could see the flyer autons bearing down on the Cloudmaster. The gigantic ship disgorged some hundred wing men with their tiny buoyant craft and long swords. The autons were making gruesome and short work of those who stood in their way.

Never had I seen an air battle of this type, man against man's creation. Lighter than air against heavier than air. With this all happening around it, the great Cloudmaster still bore down upon us with its huge gun being brought to bear directly on our bridge. I knew that our ship would be unable to survive a direct hit from that awesome weapon.

As I was frantically calling for more altitude, something strange began to happen. I could see through the windscreen that the *Pinzon* was seeming to grow glowing hair. My mind was momentarily boggled by the unaccustomed sight, but I quickly realized that what I was seeing was a multitude of electrical discharges.

For the first time in several hours, the flyer auton who had silently stood on the bridge showed interest in its surroundings. It stepped up to the windscreen to observe the unfamiliar phenomenon.

Hammond called through the tube to Tesla. "It seems to have initialized properly, Doctor Tesla." He then turned to Captain Santos-Dumont. "Shall we proceed Captain?"

Santos looked at me. "By all means!" I said.

"Initiate the drive please, Doctor Tesla." Called Hammond.

The mountain top city seemed to vanish and all around us was a blur of Earth and sky. The only part of our view which was not blurred by speed was that directly ahead. We were moving above the landscape with amazing speed. I am certain we would have outrun a cannon shell with ease.

A loud tearing and crashing sound was later found to have been the sound of the two parasite ships (unmanned at the time) being ripped from their moorings. Damage reports were coming in from all over the ship. Most of our control surfaces had been torn off and both of the gigantic propellers. What, then, was driving the ship?

"Hammond!", I called, "What the devil is going on?"

"Its the device we have been using for high speed sky ship testing. It has never been used on a vehicle of this size before though. It seems to be performing well though."

Santos-Dumont sprung from his seat, his face tight with anger. "Its destroying my ship! We have no controls!"

"That's true and I'm sorry for that." Said Lord Hammond. "The device saved our lives but it is now the single means of directing the ship. We must head for friendly territory with all due haste."

Making a quick decision I said, "This mission is over. I only pray we see home in one piece."

In only six minutes, Hammond was pointing out Bontor Sharmodna to me indicating we had reached the northern edge of the Outer Waste. Before we knew it we were over the ice covered desert and then the sea. Santos had insisted that we must bring the ship all the way to Rio De Janeiro. At the moment we were headed due north. We passed over embattled Patagonia without being able to see anything below.

Less than an hour had passed since the device had been turned on over Tippilina when we found ourselves over the great Brazilian jungle.

Santos-Dumont called a stop to make a damage assessment. He didn't want to bring the ship into Rio De Janeiro if it was going to be unable to safely stay aloft. The device was shut down and the crippled *Pinzon* immediately started to lose altitude. The upper canopy of the jungle grew inexorably closer. We were about to be stranded over a thousand miles to the northwest of our goal, for we had overshot the correct latitude because of the ship's phenomenal speed.

We first thought that we would come to rest upon the tree tops, but they proved to be unable to support the weight of the *Pinzon*. The ship struck the trees and snapped hundreds of them like toothpicks as it slid through. Thousands of frightened birds erupted from the dense green foliage. the raucous calls of monkeys and the perturbed growls of the jaguar were heard out side the ship even over the sounds of the trees tearing at the hull.

Santos called for all to brace for a crash. There were two separate stops in our motion. The first as we ground to a halt cradled within the trees and the second after the ship settled the final sixty feet to the forest floor as the trees snapped beneath us with a sound like a series of gunshots. In the last second of our descent a massive tree had thrust through the windscreen of the bridge and at the same time tore away a large section of the hull leaving that part of the ship exposed to the open air. The first and most obvious result of that was a sudden increase in the heat as the sultry jungle air replaced that from the ship. The second was an equally sudden invasion by flying insects of every description. All had been thrown off their feet at the last second of the landing and most had ended up in the rear right-hand quarter of the bridge as the fore left side of the ship pitched upward on contact.

The first to get up was the auton who spread its wings and buzzed out through the breach in the hull. In the air above us it was met by some twenty of its fellows who all flew off together in formation like a flock of ducks.

The rest of the bridge crew struggled to their feet and we immediately set to work trying to contact all hands to check for casualties. Almost all of the speaking tubes had been severed in the landing so we all had to wander throughout the ship calling for all hands to abandon ship and meet beneath the nose.

Remarkably, there were no deaths and no serious injuries and all hands met within an hour of the wreck near the nose of the hulk which was once the *Pinzon*.

Santos-Dumont was on the brink of insanity. Since the ship had gone down he had first sworn that he would insist on my court martial, then swore to have me shot and finally challenged me to a duel before settling into a sullen silence. Hammond took it upon himself to tell him that his command was over and that their survival was of paramount importance at the moment.

We took a week to set up a means of rescuing ourselves. None of the smaller cruisers attached to the *Pinzon* were in air worthy condition, but with some work, we believed a single working craft could be assembled to take a small crew to the sky base at Amazonas City for help. We had already made contact by wireless but neither we nor the Brazilian sky Navy were able to determine our exact position during that first week. It took a total of two weeks to evacuate the entire crew from the camp in the jungle and another week for a repair crew to patch and refloat the *Pinzon* so it could be towed to Amazonas to be either repaired or possibly decommissioned.

Chapter 16

Hostilities

I was tied up for weeks with reports and a formal inquest which had been requested by the Brazilian government. While I was cleared of wrong doing, the president was highly displeased with the outcome of the mission. In spite of our report of the government having been overthrown in Bromfkidor, there had been no sign of cessation of hostilities on the Patagonian front and the conclusions of our report were held suspect.

It wasn't until a full month after our crash that the character of the war changed. The line at the Rio Negro had held for close to a year mostly through the action of patrolling skyships of enormous size and armament. Cloudmasters. Now the number of these ships had dwindled.

Lately there had been reports of very strange animals on the ground on the south side of the river. Stranger even than the avisaur which were known to be native to the ice walled land. These were living constructions. Mechanical animals. Autons.

It was one of these creatures who first crossed the river in a small skyship flying a white flag. The Argentine soldiers who met it said it was almost like a man in armor. That it had spindly limbs driven by pistons and a face whose features were placed seemingly at random. It introduced itself to the Argentine general as Senor Tres and it had come to open the door for a meeting between the American heads of state with temporary director of the parliament of the provisional government of the Republic of Bromfkidor.

Seven days later The presidents of the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Brazil, the Prime Minister of California as well as the Governor of Canada met in a brand new house built on the northern bank of the river.

A small skyship crossed the river from the south and unloaded a Bromfkidoran honor guard with a display of weapons ancient through modern who flanked the door. A single man emerged and speaking perfect Spanish, identified himself as Harro Dzherod, director of parliament and head of state of the Bromfkidoran government. He had with him another man who was not Bromfkidoran but a white man named Rolando Marin. Mr. Marin was introduced as the Prime minister of the republic of Pata Gona. While this claim was met with initial outrage by the American heads of state, they resolved to listen to what the two men had to say.

Mister Marin affirmed that the people of the Patagonian region had benefited from the presence of Bromfkidoran technology and anticipated full employment of their people as an independent state.

Mister Dzherod stated that all Bromfkidoran troops and ships were going to withdraw from the South American continent within four days. There would be a total cessation of hostilities by Bromfkidor.

Mister Marin informed the assembled men that the stoma of Pata Gona had declared autonomy from Bromfkidor and had also affirmed their continued separation from the nations of Chile and Argentina and to seek their own course among the community of nations.

The assembled heads of state, while suspecting the motives for the existence of the new nation, viewed it as the price for the end of the threat, at least for the time being, of Bromfkidoran imperialism. Chilean and Argentine citizens who owned land in the region were to be given the opportunity to sell their holdings at a good price or to become Pata Gonan citizens.

Although the legality of the sovereignty of Pata Gona was debated for many years thereafter, the war effectively ended at that table that day without either a victory or a surrender.

End of the narrative of Wendell Wylie

Chapter 17

Summation

Note: The contents of this chapter do not originate in the notes of Admiral Wylie, but are assembled from a number of historical sources.

Harro Dzherod had been dictator for eighteen months when he suddenly called for the King's Table to elect a new King. They put forward two major candidates. The first was none other than Buerno Montolla who had been deposed from the throne and had run for and won a senate seat again. The second was Cladrunk NakBralt of Brant who had served as that stoma's chancellor before being elected to the King's Table. He was some seventy seven years old. NakBralt was elected and served with distinction and honor for four years until his death. Montolla was elected to replace him, the only man to ever sit twice at the head of the table.

NakBralt gave Dzherod nominal control of a territory of the Outer Waste known as Gosmojolen and at the same time asked for laws disallowing the presence of autons within the Republic of Bromfkidor. When Montolla once more became king, he saw to it that Dzherod paid for his insurrection by having him formally exiled from the seven stomi.

Dzherod, with the help of the autons, built Berszantoj, the largest town of Gosmojolen, into an important sky port in the southern hemisphere and forged strong alliances with Pata Gona and other powers in South America, thus effectively containing Bromfkidor from that side of the continent.

In 1920, the Baron of Monterey again went to Bromfkidor in an attempt to forge business ties with interests in that nation. He was not seen or heard from for over a year. This time he was ultimately successful after experiencing much trouble.

In 1921, Montolla sent sky ships against targets in New Zealand. The response was strong and

decisive. The full force of the British Empire was put into an invasion of Bromfkidor. For the damage he brought upon the nation, Montolla was imprisoned at Namina for life*.

The autons who were stranded by the crash of the *Pinzon* established a community deep in the Amazonian jungle. Their villages went undiscovered until the 1960's.

Although the Pinzon was the only ship to actually enter Bromfkidor in the war, its crew was typical of the mixture of the military forces in the conflict. With men from many countries fighting shoulder to shoulder, the war helped to forge strong alliances between all of the nations of the New World.

For many years Bromfkidor, while recognizing the rights of other nations, remained mostly aloof from contact with what they still called the "Beyonders Lands". Real diplomacy and trade began following the election of Ferthijan do Sharomna as king in 1929.

This war, like all wars brought out both the best and the worst in the men who fought it. Its gains were made at the price of great human suffering and its losses were that suffering itself in the interest of those who would have extended the force of their will to encompass the entire world. Once again mankind learned that civilizations cannot, it seems, encounter one another without strife.

Meeting Bromfkidor was a wondrous and strange beginning to an even more wondrous century.

*Buerno Montolla died in prison in 1938

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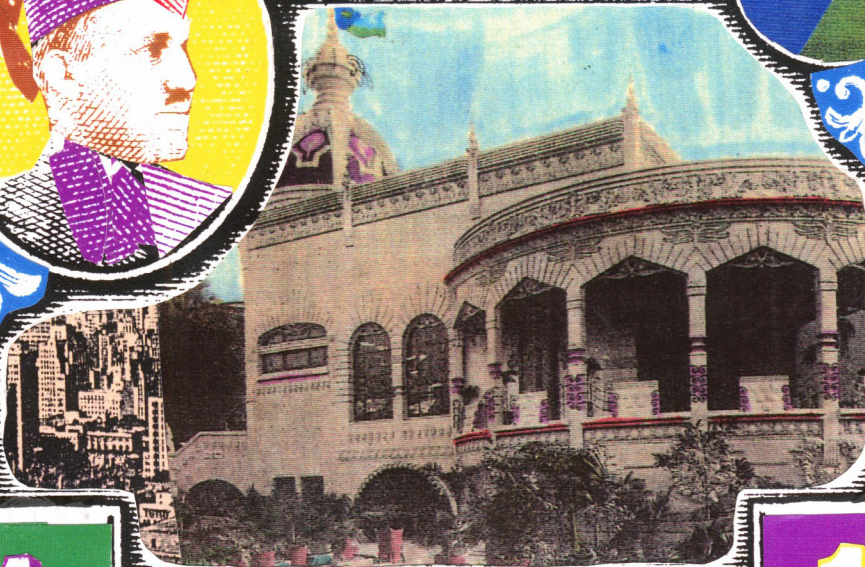
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